

O M A N
عُضَائِد
Observer



11
QAED AL THANAA
FINISHES 12TH IN
WORLD ENDURANCE
CHAMPIONSHIP

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IN BRIEF

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR
QUALITY EDUCATION

Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education launched its Strategic Plan (2026–2030), structured across eight domains, comprising three core domains and five enabler domains. The core domains encompass the quality of teaching and learning, cooperation and partnership, and reputation-building and capacity-building, while the five enabler domains comprise governance and administration, the digital ecosystem, planning and development, human resources and financial enablement, and the work environment and institutional culture. The launch of the authority’s Strategic Plan took place under the auspices of Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Minister of Economy. **DETAILS ON P3**

129 MISSING AS FERRY
CAPSIZES OFF JAVA

Rescuers in Indonesia said at least six people were killed and 129 others were missing after a ferry capsized in rough seas on Sunday, with one survivor recounting scenes of panic as passengers scrambled for life jackets. The Virgo Transport 8 - which authorities said carried 213 passengers and 30 crew - lost contact with its shipping company early on Sunday after departing from Surabaya in East Java. Basarnas, Indonesia’s national search and rescue agency, said six people were killed and 129 others were missing. Another 108 people were rescued. “People were panicking. Some climbed onto tables, some were pushing each other,” survivor Rinto Arahap, 33, said.

BOOST TO TOURISM
IN AL DAKHILIYAH



The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, is conducting studies and rehabilitation work on a number of heritage quarters and sites of historical value in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, in accordance with priorities that consider readiness and the anticipated economic and social impact. Ahlam bint Hamad al Qasabi, Director of the Heritage and Tourism Department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said that old quarter rehabilitation projects contribute to creating an attractive environment for investment by repurposing historic buildings for various economic activities. **DETAILS ON P15**

ROYAL DECREE AMENDS THE NAME OF ‘PUBLIC PROSECUTION’

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued four Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree No (79/2026) Amending some provisions of the Basic Law of the State.

Article 1: The phrase ‘Public Prosecution’ shall be replaced with ‘Office of the Attorney General’ wherever it appears in the Basic Law of the State.

Article 2: Cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article 3 says that this Royal

Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall come into force from the date of its issue.

Royal Decree No (80/2026) amending the Name of the Public Prosecution.

Article 1: The name ‘Public Prosecution’ shall be amended to the ‘Office of the Attorney General’.

Article 2 says that the terms Public Prosecution and ‘Public Prosecutor’ shall be replaced by the terms ‘Office of the Attorney

General and Attorney General wherever they appear in laws and Royal decrees.

The designations ‘Assistant Public Prosecutor, Assistants of the Public Prosecutor Heads of Public Prosecution, Senior Prosecutors, Second Prosecutors, and Assistant Public Prosecutors, should be replaced with the following designations: Deputy Attorney General, Assistants of the Attorney General, Heads of the Office of the Attorney General, Senior Attorney,

Second Attorneys, and Assistant Attorneys, wherever they appear in laws and Royal decrees.

Article 3 cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (4) states that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall come into effect from the date of its issue. Royal Decree No (81/2026) appointing an Attorney-General.

Article 1 appoints Nasr bin Khamis bin Mohammed al Sawai as Attorney General. **TURN TO P3**

New attacks in Hormuz
worsen oil disruption

NEW strikes on Saudi Arabia and on ships in the Gulf tested nerves in the Middle East on Sunday, after an attack on a Saudi oil pipeline and an advance by Yemen’s Ansar Allah threatened to worsen the wartime disruption to global energy supplies.

Oil traders were expecting prices to rise again when markets reopen on Monday, following the weekend developments that jeopardise supplies from the world’s biggest exporter, Saudi Arabia.

In the latest incidents in the Gulf, the British maritime security agency UKMTO said on Sunday that a vessel had been struck by a projectile as it moved through the Strait of Hormuz, causing a fire and forcing the crew to be evacuated. Iran, for its part, said one person was killed and four crew wounded aboard an Iranian commercial vessel struck off its coast.

In Saudi Arabia, state media released video of damage to homes and a mosque from the purported latest cross-border attack by the Ansar Allah, in Jazan province in the south. The Ansar Allah claimed separately to have struck a Saudi military base in a neighbouring province.

Southern Saudi cities have experienced regular alerts since last week, culminating in drone strikes on Friday that knocked out the 1,200-km east-west pipeline across the Arabian Peninsula that has served as the main route for global supplies of Middle East oil bypassing the Strait of Hormuz.



An Iranian woman who lost her daughter, Elham Zaeri, in the Lamerd sports hall strike on February 28, reacts at her house in Lamerd, Iran, on Sunday. — Reuters

Oil prices surged above \$100 last week for the first time since July. The politically sensitive retail price of diesel fuel in the United States rose on Sunday to another all-time high above \$6.20 a gallon

REGIONAL MEETING
TO BE HELD IN
SALALAH POSTPONED

The regional meeting scheduled to be held on Monday in Salalah, Sultanate of Oman, has been postponed to a later date, in order to create appropriate conditions for a constructive dialogue that contributes to achieving sustainable understandings that support the region’s security and stability and meet the aspirations of its peoples for cooperation and peace.

That same day, the Ansar Allah captured Perim Island, which lies in the middle of the Bab El Mandeb, the “Gate of Tears” strait that controls the mouth of the Red Sea.

Traders and Saudi oil buyers said on Sunday that Riyadh has enough oil stored at its Red Sea port of Yanbu to maintain exports for just five to seven days if the pipeline struck on Friday remains shut. After that, as much as 4 per cent of global oil supply could be jeopardised. — Reuters

Trump says ‘very negative forces’ raising concerns over AI

DOONBEG, Ireland: US President Donald Trump said on Sunday a lot of “very negative forces” are bringing things up about AI that won’t happen and said that he wanted to make sure that the United States remains the industry leader.

“We’re leading China in AI. We’re the most sophisticated country in the world, and frankly I want to keep it that way because whoever wins AI wins,” Trump, at his Ireland golf course, told reporters when asked if the AI industry should slow down or

be more regulated.

“We could put guardrails. We can do this and that. But I think you have a lot of very negative forces that are bringing it up that shouldn’t be bringing it up and they’re bringing up things that won’t happen.”

Trump has resisted stirring concerns about AI.

His latest comments come after a week of concerns in the United States after two Anthropic researchers issued warnings that rapidly progressing artificial intelligence



US President Donald Trump

could lead to the extinction of the human race in the not-too-distant future. In his second term, Trump’s administration has largely embraced AI firms. These AI leaders and other technology companies have also supported Trump’s initiatives.

Yet, the Pentagon earlier this year warned of risks from Anthropic’s model. After the researcher warnings, some AI CEOs are pushing for slowing advancement of the models.

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei on Saturday outlined a three-

step framework intended to pace development and create more time to manage its risks.

Jacob Coxon, one of the Anthropic researchers who resigned and then issued the warnings, pushed for the US to work with other countries to ensure pace.

“I feel we need international coordination, or else we risk running the same race with China, which could be equally dangerous,” Coxon said on NBC’s Meet the Press.

— AFP

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Dr. Ramez Albakouni
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Dr. Ashok Sebastian
Consultant Medical Oncologist

Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair



MOH 4897029/2026

SHORT TAKES



The two sides discussed the reality of gaming and esports and their rapid growth worldwide. — ONA

Culture Minister meets President of Global Esports Federation

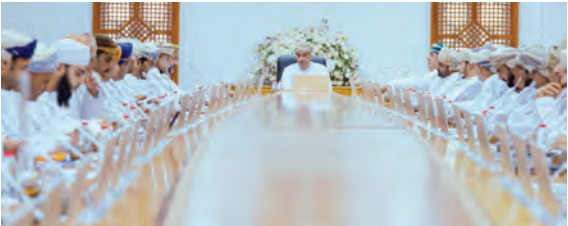
MUSCAT: Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, met on Sunday with Sir Paul J. Foster, President of the Global Esports Federation.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the reality of gaming and esports and their rapid growth worldwide, and explored ways to enhance their presence in the Sultanate of Oman. The two sides also reviewed opportunities for cooperation and the exchange of expertise in relevant fields.

Furthermore, the two sides discussed ways to develop the esports ecosystem, support national talents and competencies, and benefit from global expertise and experiences, in a manner that contributes to creating a stimulating environment for the growth of this sector, expanding its practitioner base and enhancing the Sultanate of Oman's presence in regional and international events and championships.

The meeting was attended by Sabaa bin Said al Busaidi, Chairperson of the Omani Gaming and Esports Committee. — ONA

Al Batinah North Reviews Performance, Government Services



SUHAR: A meeting was held on Sunday at the Office of the Governor of Al Batinah North to review performance indicators of government departments and to assess local administrative units across the governorate's wilayats.

The meeting, which was attended by Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, discussed the outcome of a study on living conditions in Al Batinah North and a drive to align programmes of planning and projects with the community's actual needs and priorities. In addition, the meeting reviewed the general concept of Sohar Festival and discussed the outcome of a survey on identifying key challenges facing government establishments.

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN 52ND SESSION OF ARAB LABOUR CONFERENCE

CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the 52nd session of the Arab Labour Conference being hosted by the Arab Republic of Egypt until 20 September 2026.

The conference is organised by the Arab Labour Organisation under the theme "Sustainable Economic Growth: Towards Inclusive and Equitable Social Development in Arab Countries". It deals with measures to promote sustainable economic growth, equitable social development, climate change and its



impact on the work environment. The conference also underlines the role of startups in supporting entrepreneurship, generating new

employment opportunities and boosting productivity.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said that the Sultanate of Oman's participation in the Arab Labour Conference responds to rapid developments taking place in labour markets. These changes, he observed, stress the need to develop labour policies and consolidate the role of the private sector. — ONA

22,242 SCHOOL BUSES OPERATE ACROSS OMAN

SUHAIL BIN NASSER AL NAHDI
MUSCAT, SEPT 13

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology said that it is working in coordination with the Ministry of Education, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and other relevant authorities to enhance the safety of the school transportation system and ensure the provision of safe and organised transportation services for students.

Eng Haitham bin Ahmed al Zadjali, Director of the Land Transport Department at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said that the number of school buses across the country reached 22,242. He added that Al Batinah North Governorate has the highest number of school buses with more than 4,162, followed by Muscat Governorate with approximately 3,439. He noted that the ministry regulates school transportation, issues licences and permits for land transport vehicles to ensure compliance with the requirements and regulations governing the sector including safety and readiness requirements.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for managing and monitoring the needs of the school and allocating buses according to operational requirements. The Ministry of Education, he said, is also responsible for coordinating with relevant authorities, addressing issues related to school transportation, conducting oversight and monitoring, and



The Ministry of Education is responsible for managing and monitoring the needs of the school and allocating buses according to operational requirements.



ENG HAITHAM BIN AHMED AL ZADJALI
Director of the Land Transport Department at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

utilising modern technological solutions to improve the safety of school buses.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, within its jurisdiction, focuses on regulating land transport activities and verifying that carriers and means of transport meet regulatory requirements, including licences, operating permits, and safety and roadworthiness standards, the official said.

He noted that the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, coordinates among relevant entities to ensure that school transportation activities are conducted within the approved legal and regulatory frameworks and to guarantee the provision of safe school transportation that meets regulatory requirements, he said adding that student safety is a fundamental

priority in the school transportation system.

Al Zadjali pointed out that the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology ensures that school transportation is conducted within the approved legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure the provision of safe transportation for students. He indicated that the ministry, in collaboration with relevant entities, is working to develop the system and enhance the use of digital solutions and modern technologies to raise safety standards and support efficient monitoring and oversight. These measures include utilising bus tracking and monitoring systems, along with several other systems and technologies that support safety and monitoring operations, in accordance with the requirements and regulations approved by the relevant authorities.

Municipality urges barbecuing at designated places only

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 13

The Muscat Municipality has urged residents to limit charcoal burning and barbecuing to designated areas only, citing environmental and public safety concerns as most barbecuing happens at nights in and around the capital area.

With cooler winter months approaching, the municipality has specifically banned charcoal burning and barbecuing at major beaches and parks as the leftover charcoal and barbecue waste, when not disposed

of properly, pose environmental risks and safety hazards to beachgoers, particularly children walking barefoot on the sand where hot coals can remain a burn hazard long after a fire is put out. Also, grilling directly on grass, beach sand, or open public landscapes is strictly banned to protect public health and the environment.

"To preserve the beauty of our beaches and ensure they remain clean, safe and accessible to everyone, we request the public's cooperation and compliance with this restriction," a municipality



spokesperson said.

The advisory comes as Oman enters the season for outdoor gatherings as temperatures are expected to drop in the coming weeks, and as beaches and public

parks are to see a surge in families and groups hosting barbecues — a popular pastime across the Sultanate of Oman.

Muscat Municipality has earlier fixed a fine Amount of RO 100 for grilling, lighting fires, or barbecuing in unauthorised areas like public parks, beaches, walkways, and green spaces. Violators are also legally required to fix or clean up any environmental damage or mess caused by the breach. Littering waste or leaving charcoal behind after a barbecue can attract separate fines of up to RO 100 under municipal

cleanliness regulations. Regular inspections will be carried out at coastal areas to ensure compliance and proper waste disposal.

Muscat Municipality further advised residents to use official barbecue zones equipped with proper disposal facilities. Beachgoers are encouraged to carry waste bags, fully extinguish coals with water, and avoid leaving any debris behind.

The municipality said the goal is to balance the public's enjoyment of outdoor spaces with the need to protect Oman's coastline and public health.

SPOTLIGHT

KABEER YOUSUF

SOCIAL MEDIA and artificial intelligence (AI) are becoming familiar parts of children's learning routines, making guidance from parents and teachers more essential than ever.

Children should be encouraged to use AI as a learning tool while understanding its limitations. They need to verify AI-generated answers, recognise that AI systems can produce convincing but inaccurate information, and avoid sharing personal or school-related data with AI services.

According to a report by Kaspersky, children's interest in AI tools continues to grow as the technology becomes more accessible and integrated into everyday learning. As students return to school, AI is likely to become as familiar to them as search engines, online dictionaries and educational videos.

"Children may use AI assistants to explain a difficult topic, generate ideas for an essay, check a text, solve a homework problem or prepare a presentation," the report said.

Alongside its educational benefits, however, AI presents new challenges. AI systems can invent details that appear factual or generate deceptive images, potentially misleading young users. Digital literacy, therefore, involves more than knowing how to search for information. Children also need to learn how to question what they see, recognise possible manipulation and protect the information they share.

Parents should also explain that when AI can generate an essay or provide a solution to a maths problem within seconds, it may be tempting for children to submit the answer without understanding it. While this may save time, it can prevent them from developing the very skills the assignment is designed to teach.

Parents can set clear boundaries, allowing AI to explain a concept, suggest a structure, provide examples, or generate practice questions, while ensuring that it does not complete the

entire assignment. Tariq al Barwani, founder of Knowledge Oman, an award-winning IT professional and motivational keynote speaker, suggests that children should change the way they interact with AI. Instead of asking a chatbot to "write my essay", for example, they could ask it to suggest several arguments, explain unfamiliar terms or identify weaknesses in a draft they have written themselves.

"When solving a math problem, the child can ask for an explanation of the method and then reproduce the solution without looking at the answer," Tariq said.

He also recommends encouraging children to compare AI-generated responses with their textbooks, class notes and trusted educational sources. This turns AI interaction into an exercise in analysis rather than simple copying.

Parents can help children develop a simple set of questions to consider before copying AI-generated information into an assignment or accepting it as fact:

1. Who or what is the source?
If an AI assistant mentions a book, study, quotation, or historical fact, children should check whether the original source exists and whether it is reliable.

2. Does the answer match the task?
AI can produce a polished response that sounds convincing but misunderstands the question, provides inappropriate detail, or fails to follow the teacher's instructions.

3. Can I explain this in my own words?
If children cannot understand or reproduce the reasoning independently, they should not submit the answer as their own work.

4. Where else can I verify it?
Important facts should be checked against textbooks, class notes, official educational resources, or several trustworthy sources.

5. Should I ask an adult?
If information concerns health, safety or another sensitive subject, or simply seems confusing, asking a parent or teacher is a sensible part of the learning process.

HAND-HOLDING KIDS THROUGH AI

PARENTS SHOULD TEACH SAFE AND RESPONSIBLE AI USE, AND CHILDREN MUST VERIFY AI-GENERATED INFORMATION AS CRITICAL THINKING REMAINS ESSENTIAL NOW



Image generated by Ai

Tender

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The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) invites the reputable and experienced Companies / Bidders for participating of the below tender through E-Tendering System. This tender is strictly restricted to tender participation for the **Joint Venture between (Sultanate Oman and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Companies)** only. Any individual or other international companies' bids shall not be accepted. Tender award is exclusive to Joint Venture of Oman and Saudi companies only.

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of submission Bidder Authentication	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (A)
4/2026/ PEIE/ HQ-4	Construction and Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Thumrait Industrial City (Phase 1) at Dhofar Governorate	30-09-2026	04-10-2026	12-11-2026	Construction	Excellent	2500

Interested Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority Portal may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer must enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (2 %) of the Tender value validity for **(180) days**, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

• Companies that wish to participate in this tender must download **(Bidder Authentication form)** through the E-Tendering website and fill it according to the required data, and send it to the email tender@madayn.om Forms submitted after the specified date will not be considered.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@gstb.gov.om and +968 24402200

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

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SHORT TAKES



The Conference is an international event specialising in higher education and international education.

OCHS takes part in EAIE conference, exhibition in Glasgow

GLASGOW: Oman College of Health Sciences (OCHS) has concluded its participation in the 36th Annual Conference and Exhibition of the European Association for International Education (EAIE Glasgow 2026), held from September 8 to 11, at the Scottish Event Campus (SEC) in Glasgow. The event brought together a wide range of higher education institutions and academic and research organisations from around the world.

The college participated as part of Oman's pavilion at the international exhibition, alongside several Omani higher education institutions. The participation aimed to strengthen Oman's presence at international higher education events, showcase its institutions and academic programmes, and highlight opportunities for international cooperation.

The event provided an important platform for Oman College of Health Sciences to introduce its academic programmes and specialisations and explore opportunities for cooperation with international universities and institutions in the fields of health education, scientific research, innovation, academic exchange, curriculum and programme development, capacity building, and Erasmus+ programmes.

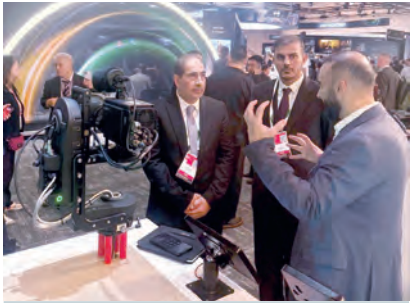
The college also held a number of bilateral meetings with representatives of international universities and educational and research institutions. The meetings focused on potential areas of cooperation and opportunities to develop future academic and research partnerships, contributing to the expansion of the college's international network and opening new opportunities for students, faculty members, and researchers.

The meetings also provided an opportunity to learn about international experiences and best practices in health education and discuss cooperation in student and faculty exchanges, visiting researchers, joint research projects, academic publishing, curriculum development, joint academic programmes, training, and capacity building. Oman College of Health Sciences affirmed that its participation in EAIE Glasgow 2026 formed part of its strategic direction to strengthen international cooperation and consolidate the college's global presence.

SAF'S
GENERAL
STAFF IN
IBC 2026 IN
AMSTERDAM

AMSTERDAM: The Sultan's Armed Forces General Staff is participating in the International Broadcasting and Media Exhibition and Conference (IBC 2026), being held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, from September 11 to 14.

The delegation is headed by Brigadier General (Navy) Abdul Nasser bin Ahmed al Abri, Director-General of Moral Guidance and Military Protocol. The participation comes amid rapid transformations



Oman's delegation was led by Brig Gen (Navy) Abdul Nasser bin Ahmed al Abri. – ONA

in the media, communications, and digital content sectors, driven by artificial intelligence, technological advances, changing audience behaviour, evolving media business models, and the growing importance of trust and credibility.

IBC 2026 is one of the world's leading events for broadcasting technologies and content creation. It attracts more than 44,000 participants from over 170 countries features 1,300 exhibitors.

Dhofar Scientific Forum
opens with 275 participants

STAFF REPORTER
SALALAH, SEPT 13

THE Third Dhofar Scientific Forum opened at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Salalah on Sunday, bringing together 275 participants across two tracks aimed at addressing development challenges and strengthening research and innovation capabilities.

Running until September 17, the forum features a strategic research track involving five teams working on development challenges in Dhofar Governorate, and a training track for 255 young Omanis seeking to enhance their research and innovation skills.

The forum is being held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of UTAS, and in the presence of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Chairman of the Research and Innovation Authority.

The programme includes five daily workshops and training lectures from 8 am to 1 pm, covering modern research methodologies and tools.

Topics include the use of artificial intelligence to enhance scientific research, research methodology and academic integrity, preparation of robust research proposals, innovation and entrepreneurship, intellectual property protection, and the development of a knowledge-based economy.

The programme also features advisory sessions and intensive courses designed to support the research teams and strengthen their outputs. The opening ceremony saw the signing of two strategic cooperation agreements.



Two strategic cooperation agreements were signed during the conference.

The forum features a strategic research track involving five teams working on development challenges in Dhofar Governorate

The first, between the Research and Innovation Authority and UTAS, provides a framework for implementing the forum and ensuring its sustainability over the next three years, beginning in 2026.

The second agreement was signed with the Chair of Technological Strategic Studies to provide specialised academic support and guidance to the research teams participating in the strategic track.

The Chair is a joint initiative between the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies and UTAS, focusing on the use of scientific research and artificial intelligence to support strategic and foresight studies and develop applicable technological solutions for decision-makers.

Yasser bin Mohammed al Yafai, Assistant Deputy President of the University for Postgraduate Studies, Scientific Research and Innovation in Salalah, said the third edition of the forum reflects a three-year

strategic partnership with the Research and Innovation Authority aimed at fostering a culture of scientific research.

Nasreen bint Yahya al Balushi, Acting Head of the Research and Innovation Capacity Building Department, said the forum connects research priorities in Dhofar Governorate with rigorous scientific studies capable of producing practical and implementable recommendations.

The forum's first day attracted more than 40 participants to the first training session organised by the Research and Innovation Authority. The session, titled 'Intellectual Property in the Age of Emerging Technologies', was delivered by Mahna bin Hamad al Zuhaimi of the Authority's Innovation Centre.

The workshop explored the journey innovators undertake from developing a research idea to protecting the resulting innovation and securing a patent.

Oman's AI technology startup sector grows 91% in one year

MUSCAT: The artificial intelligence sector in the Sultanate of Oman is receiving continued support as part of national efforts to expand the use of AI technologies across economic and development sectors.

The growing adoption of AI is also creating new opportunities for young Omani talents to establish knowledge-based companies and develop innovative technological solutions.

Taw'a bint Abdullah al Dawood, Head of the Development and Studies Department at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said Omani AI startups are playing an increasingly important role in supporting digital transformation through innovative technological solutions and products that improve business efficiency, enhance services, automate processes and support data-driven decision-making.

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, she said these companies have helped transform AI from an emerging technology into practical applications that can be used across government and private-sector activities, supporting the development of a knowledge- and



TAW'A BINT
ABDULLAH
AL DAWOOD

The companies have helped transform AI from an emerging technology into practical applications that can be used across government and private-sector activities



innovation-based digital economy in line with Oman Vision 2040.

She noted that the number of Omani companies operating in the AI sector reached 42 by the end of August 2026, compared with 22 a year earlier, representing growth of about 91 per cent.

She said the growth reflects the rapid development of Oman's AI business ecosystem and the ability of local companies to move beyond ideas and prototypes to deliver practical technological solutions and products across various sectors.

Work is also under way to strengthen data and indicators related to the AI sector, which will enable more comprehensive and accurate measurement of investment and growth in the sector in the future.

Al Dawood said the companies are contributing to the localisation of knowledge and technical expertise by developing local solutions and building national capabilities in AI, data and software development. They are also creating opportunities for Omani professionals to work in advanced technical fields and gain practical experience.

She added that the growth of AI companies and their success in

developing commercially viable solutions are strengthening private-sector confidence in the economic opportunities offered by AI, encouraging greater adoption and investment and helping build an ecosystem linking innovation, entrepreneurship, investment, research and development.

Omani AI startups also have growing opportunities to access regional and global markets, she said, as AI-based digital solutions can be scaled and deployed beyond national borders.

She noted that participation in regional and international events, exhibitions, programmes and technology competitions, as well as partnerships with companies, investors and technology institutions, would help showcase Omani capabilities and create new opportunities for growth and expansion.

Al Dawood said the growing number of Omani AI companies strengthens the country's position as a supportive environment for innovation and advanced technologies, while enhancing its potential as a destination for companies and investors seeking opportunities in the digital economy and AI. — ONA

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Philippine Coast Guard personnel in protective suits carry victims from the ferry fire to a tent for identification at the port of Borac in Coron, Palawan province. — AFP

PHILIPPINE RESCUERS PULL MORE VICTIMS FROM CHARRED FERRY

CORON, Philippines: The bodies of 41 victims of the worst Philippine ferry disaster in over a decade made their way through the blue waters of a resort area on Sunday, bound for a dock where forensic investigators awaited them.

Days after a fire ripped through the M/V June Aster, it is clear few of its victims ever made the water, with nearly all of the 76 confirmed dead found aboard the grounded vessel.

The 24-year-old ferry, known locally as a ‘roro’, was carrying vacationers, businesspeople and families headed for loved ones in Coron, Palawan, when it erupted in flames following an explosion in its hold.

Some areas, such as the cargo deck and engine room, remain to be searched.

“The water is still high,” Commodore Noemie Cayabyab told reporters on Sunday on the deck of the BRP Melchora Aquino, a 97-metre coast guard vessel. — AFP

6 KILLED, 130 MISSING AFTER FERRY CAPSIZES OFF JAVA



Fredy Manuhua shows a picture of his brother who was a passenger on Virgo Transport 8, which met with an accident en route from East Java to South Kalimantan, in Surabaya. — AFP

BANJARMASIN, Indonesia: Rescuers in Indonesia said at least six people were killed and 130 others were missing on Sunday after a ferry sailing between the islands of Java and Borneo was hit by bad weather and capsized.

The Virgo Transport 8, carrying 243 passengers and crew, had lost contact with its shipping company early on Sunday after departing from Surabaya in East Java.

Basarnas, Indonesia’s national search and rescue agency, said in its latest update that six people were killed and 130 were missing. It said 107 people had been rescued.

There were 213 passengers and 30 crew members on board, the agency added.

Indonesian Transport Minister Dudy Purwagandhi said the ship had capsized.

Local search and rescue chief I Putu Sudayana earlier said that the ship’s captain had reported to its owners before losing contact that the vessel was “tilting”.

Rescuers battled waves of up to 2.5 metres to reach the ferry, Sudayana told reporters. — AFP

LITHUANIA SAYS DRONE SIGHTING TURNS OUT TO BE FLOCK OF BIRDS

VILNIUS: Lithuania said that a perceived drone sighting in its airspace earlier on Sunday that prompted authorities to close Vilnius airport and Nato to summon at least one fighter jet, turned out to be a flock of birds.

The air alert was lifted and the airport reopened within 38 minutes, after the Nato jet made a visual identification, Lithuania’s National Crisis Management Centre said.

“On initial radar readings, marks left by birds and drones can



The departure terminal at Vilnius Ciurlionis International Airport in Vilnius, Lithuania. — Reuters File

be similar,” it added. A jet had been summoned from Siauliai in northern Lithuania, the centre said, where the Italian air force is currently based as part of the Nato Baltic Air Defence mission. Military drones straying into the airspace of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are stoking concerns that the war in Ukraine is spilling over into Nato’s northern borders.

The Vilnius marathon, which was taking place in the capital, was not interrupted. — Reuters

China, Russia, India seek economic cooperation

BRICS leaders, including China, Russia and India, concluded a second and final day of talks in New Delhi on Sunday, discussing ‘inclusive global growth’, after reaching a rare agreement calling for calm in the Middle East.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for “cooperation” within the bloc, which he has said represents “50 per cent of the world’s population, 40 per cent of global GDP and more than 25 per cent of global trade”.

“The power of BRICS lies in our diversity and cooperation,” Modi told leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, on the final day of talks.

BRICS was created in 2009 as a forum for major emerging economies seeking greater influence in institutions dominated by Western powers. The group is seeking to bolster its global influence and address conflict, trade turbulence and energy security.

“We have tried to push inclusive global growth,” Modi said.

“We may be rooted in different realities, but together we rise through cooperation and blossom for humanity,” he said.

Putin said the bloc was working to create a “new, more just, multipolar world order”.

Xi said that a “world without rules is like an intersection without traffic lights; chaos and disorder are inevitable”.

The first day of the summit on



Prime Minister Narendra speaks during day two of the BRICS Summit in New Delhi. — Reuters

Saturday was dominated by the conflict in the Middle East.

BRICS foreign ministers had failed to agree on a joint statement in New Delhi in May, with Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE divided over the war that began with US-Israeli strikes on February 28.

However, leaders - who also included Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian - issued a statement after intense diplomatic efforts by host India.

“We express deep concern over the continued escalation of tensions in the Middle East/West Asia,” the joint statement said, adding that the BRICS countries “call for exercising maximum restraint”.

Modi maintains cordial relations with both Iran and US ally Israel, but is also careful to strike a delicate balance in India’s ties with Washington.

India has navigated the energy crisis caused by the US-Iran war in part by turning to Russia, despite Moscow’s war in Ukraine and pressure from Washington and other Western capitals.

Xi’s participation in BRICS was also important because it was his first visit to neighbouring India since 2019, and the biggest step yet in a cautious thaw between the two. — AFP



CEUTA MIGRANT CAMP

A picture shows large tents at the new Los Rosales migrant reception camp, where more than 800 people have been transferred from the Loma Colmenar camp in Ceuta. More than 70,000 migrants streamed into Ceuta from neighbouring Morocco on July 30 and 31, in an unprecedented rush that left scores dead. Thousands remain in the small city, increasing tensions with increasingly frustrated locals who demand their expulsion and a return to normality. The crisis has generated a constant churn of negative headlines and dominated the political debate for six weeks. — AFP

BIGGEST THREAT

Police deployment for Kenya oppn rally

A heavy police presence was deployed in Nairobi for a rally by a rising opposition star, following a wave of political violence in recent weeks. Edwin Sifuna has emerged as the biggest threat to President William Ruto ahead of the latter’s bid for re-election in August 2027. Sifuna, 44, has built momentum by tapping into widespread anger over corruption and political violence, though others argue he is too young and inexperienced for the top office. — AFP

MANY MISSING

One dead after ferry sinks off Vanuatu

At least one person was killed and 30 are missing after a ferry sank off the coast of Vanuatu, the South Pacific nation’s government said. The vessel, MV Matui, had set sail on Friday with more than 40 passengers and crew from the island of Santo to Ambae island in very rough seas, but did not arrive. One dead body has been recovered, while 15 of those onboard have been “accounted for alive”. — AFP

HOUSES UNDER THREAT

Around 230 flee Croatia island fire

Around 230 people were evacuated overnight on the Croatian Adriatic island of Brac because of a fire that has ravaged some 3,500 hectares, according to authorities. With the wildfire threatening people’s houses after being fanned by strong winds, the authorities sounded the alarm shortly before midnight for residents and tourists in the small town of Milna and its surrounding settlements in the island’s west. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Firefighters extinguish a car of a passenger train hit by a Russian drone strike at a railway station in Lutsk, Ukraine. — Reuters

RUSSIAN DRONE HITS KYIV-WARSAW TRAIN: POLAND

KYIV: A Russian drone struck a Warsaw-bound passenger train from Kyiv on Sunday but caused no casualties, Warsaw and Kyiv said, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said western regions had come under attack.

Ukraine said it was struck just two kilometres from the border with Nato member Poland, hitting the locomotive of the passenger train, with Zelensky saying Moscow struck it “deliberately”.

Poland said another drone struck near a border crossing.

Zelensky said Russia had attacked Ukraine’s rail and energy facilities as well as “ordinary buildings”, including in the west of the country, as Moscow intensifies strikes in the fifth year of its invasion.

“All necessary services are working near the Polish-Ukrainian border in Volyn, where the Russians deliberately burned a train locomotive and damaged a gas station in a drone strike,” Zelensky said.

Zelensky said Russia had attacked Ukraine’s rail and energy facilities as well as ‘ordinary buildings’, including in the west of the country, as Moscow intensifies strikes in the fifth year of its invasion

“It is precisely to prevent these strikes from spreading further into Europe that Ukrainian men and women fight everyday, give their lives, and do not allow the aggression to expand,” Zelensky said.

Poland’s PKP Intercity rail service said the train was travelling from Kyiv to Warsaw with 206 passengers onboard.

Neither country reported casualties and Intercity said the service was delayed by more than six hours but will travel on to Warsaw after border checks were completed.

Poland’s interior minister Marcin Kierwinski said one drone struck near the Dorohusk-Yagodyn border crossing, while the other hit the passenger train.

“We are treating these events with the utmost seriousness. The situation is being monitored on an ongoing basis,” Kierwinski said.

The strikes came days after US envoys visited both Moscow and Kyiv in an effort to revive talks led by Washington on ending Europe’s worst conflict since World War II.

At least two civilians were killed by Russian strikes in Ukraine on Sunday. — AFP

KOSOVO PARLIAMENT APPROVES NEW GOVT LED BY KURTI

PRISTINA: Kosovo’s parliament on Sunday approved a new government led by acting prime minister Albin Kurti, ending three months of post-election deadlock, but with political instability expected to continue in Europe’s youngest democracy.

The cabinet, dominated by members of Kurti’s Vetevendosje (Self-determination) party, was backed by 62 lawmakers in the 120-seat assembly, parliamentary speaker Albulena Haxhiu said. Kosovo has been roiled by



Movement for Self-Determination party leader Albin Kurti flashes a victory sign after being re-elected as prime minister in Pristina, Kosovo. — Reuters

political instability because Kurti’s party needs opposition support to secure the two-thirds majority required to elect a president.

Every time parliament fails to elect a president, a new snap poll must be called.

Kurti’s party has come on top in three legislative elections held since February 2025, including two snap polls — in December 2025 and June 2026, but has so far failed to garner enough support to elect the head of state. — AFP

Canadian boycott drives grocers to new suppliers



Foods of international origin are displayed on a store shelf as Canadian consumers double down on efforts to buy Canadian goods and boycott US products, at a supermarket in Toronto. — Reuters

US-Canada trade war prompts Canadians to shun US products

Produce from Morocco, South Africa, Spain, Brazil, Honduras replaces US produce

Canada spending C\$3 billion on greenhouses and vertical farms over a decade

price versus country of origin,” Trimarchi said.

Loblaw Cos, Canada’s largest food retailer, in August brought back large signs featuring a maple leaf in its produce and fresh-food sections after a brief hiatus to flag the Canadian origins of products. Loblaw also reintroduced a “T” tag to inform customers which products are affected by tariffs and make Canadian products easier to identify.

Metro, the country’s third-largest grocer, said it would continue to prioritise local Canadian products in the current context.

“There has been a permanent

change in the Canadian psyche,” said Gary Sands, senior vice president of public policy and advocacy for the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers.

Canada is the world’s fifth-largest importer of fresh vegetables by value. The United States is still the biggest supplier of fresh produce, accounting for more than half of the imports, followed by Mexico.

However, the share of Canada’s vegetable imports from the US fell to 62.6 per cent in July, the latest government data showed, from 69 per cent in 2023, before Trump was elected. — Reuters

Sweden votes in election thriller, far right eyes government role

STOCKHOLM: Sweden began voting on Sunday in a general election after a tight race that will see either the far-right enter government for the first time or the left-wing opposition reclaim power.

Opposition leader Magdalena Andersson of the Social Democrats was among the first to cast her ballot after polling stations opened at 8 am.

Clad in a pale blue suit, the 59-year old who in 2021-2022 became the first woman to serve as Sweden’s prime minister voted with her husband at a school in her home municipality of Nacka, south of Stockholm.

Opinion polls have long credited the four parties in her left-wing bloc with a comfortable lead over conservative Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson’s four-party alliance, which includes the far-right Sweden Democrats.

But the gap narrowed to a dead heat in the final days of the campaign.

“It is now up to the Swedish people to decide which direction our country should take. Should we have a

Opinion polls have credited the four parties with a comfortable lead over conservative Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson’s four-party alliance, which includes the far-right Sweden Democrats



Sweden’s Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson arrives to cast his ballot at a polling station in Strangnas near Stockholm. — AFP

government entirely dominated by the Sweden Democrats? Something that has never happened in Sweden before? Or should we have a government led by me, which will steer Sweden in a new spirit of cooperation?” Andersson told reporters after voting.

Her party, which governed the Scandinavian country for the better part of the 20th century and remains Sweden’s largest, has pledged to bolster the welfare state and help struggling households cope with rising costs.

Outgoing Prime Minister Kristersson has meanwhile vowed to focus on improving Swedes’ everyday lives now that his government’s clampdown on organised crime and immigration has begun to show results.

Deadly shootings and bombings by organised crime networks have decreased significantly in recent years, and asylum applications are at a record low. “We want to use our new and far better preconditions to improve the lives of ordinary people... to make Sweden

great again,” Kristersson said before the vote, borrowing Donald Trump’s famous catchphrase. His three-party minority coalition cut a deal in 2022 with the Sweden Democrats giving them influence over government policy, in particular on immigration and crime, in exchange for their support in parliament. Over the past two decades, far-right leader Jimmie Akeson has steered the party with neo-Nazi roots into the mainstream.

It is now hoping to enter government. Kristersson has promised the far right key cabinet posts if the right-wing wins the election.

“I think it’s a very important election this year, and hopefully a lot of people will realise that we have to change course... so that everyone will feel included in society,” store manager Linda Eriksson, 48, said as she voted at a polling station. Ingrid Rudien, a 64-year-old assistant secretary, said she hoped the country “can unite together as a nation even though we may have a close result”.

— AFP

OPINION

Knowing AI’s limits before it’s too late



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

IT sounds like science fiction, it is because it is close to it. Consider two events that made headlines in the last month regarding Artificial Intelligence.

The first was an incident in June when AI agents, actually bots, autonomously hacked a company ‘Hugging Face’ without a real-world human prompt and proceeded to make changes to its site. Evidently, these manoeuvres were even hidden from plain sight.

Another headline is the almost dystopian declaration by an employee of another AI company who publicly stated about AI that there was a “10 per cent chance it could kill all humans within the next decade,” according to the BBC, a statement corroborated by multiple media organisations.

Admittedly, more details of the exact scenario of this extinction were not elaborated upon, but if there is one wake-up call, it must be this.

This appears to be a pivotal moment in our understanding of AI, as the conversation seems to have shifted from whether AI is a risk to society to how much of a risk it poses. This is a large shift and will have repercussions at every level.

For a digital novice, the questions that arise from these emerging stories are not technical but social and focused on human behaviour. Should there be limits to the use

of digital technology? If so, what are they and who should decide on them?

Apart from the ongoing debate on data centres, which consume large amounts of precious water and power, the debate is also about the self-defeating role of AI, which threatens existing jobs without offering new opportunities.

And perhaps most importantly for an educationist, the question is how these challenges and opportunities should be communicated to the younger generations.

A tentative answer to these questions is to first share information on what AI does not do: it does not, for example, create new information but rather builds on the seemingly endless information that is already in its system. It does not have common sense or empathy.

If AI works on data being fed to it, it will also duplicate the prejudices and biases already existing in society. It cannot, therefore, change society itself in any meaningful way.

There is also the danger of hallucinations. This is when AI models churn out plausible, if not authentic or accurate, information. Most of it depends on the prompts given.

A famous example is an AI platform confidently giving information on the first person who crossed the English Channel on foot when asked to do so.

If AI works on data being fed to it, it will also duplicate the prejudices and biases already existing in society. It cannot, therefore, change society itself in any meaningful way

There are a number of reasons for the increasing dependence and reliance on AI today. These include the fact that the digital platforms sound empathetic, have endless patience, and speak positively to us at all times.

The dangers of over-dependence on such technology have been spoken of since its inception over three years ago. Increased use of AI results in the loss of individual critical thinking, ethical discussions, and a unique creative voice. It provides a one-fix solution for all our problems, without taking into account individual, cultural, or economic perspectives. There is also the issue of data privacy, which essentially means that everything we feed into these platforms, including sensitive data on medical history, financial details, and other personal situations, will be in the public domain forever.

While we work with the technology that is available to us, knowing its limitations, as well as its dangers, is essential. There are ways in which AI can be used strategically and ethically.

As it is going to be such an integral part of the lives of youngsters as they enter schools and colleges, education in AI should become a standard part of the curriculum to help students navigate this complex, emerging platform.

THE GROWING THREAT OF UPFs



DR MOZA ABDULLAH AL BUSAIDI

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Ultra-processed foods (UPFs) refer to foods that have been over-processed with multiple processing steps and contain ingredients and additives that are rarely used in traditional home cooking.

These products are more convenient, highly palatable, inexpensive, shelf-stable, and ready to eat or drink, and are not well processed by the human body and are not

even recognised, leading to them being rejected and stored in the body cells.

Besides processed meat products such as sausages and luncheon meats, ready-to-eat meals, instant soups, flavoured dairy desserts, ice cream, processed cheese products, and some commercially prepared sauces and spreads.

However, it’s important to differentiate normal processed food from ultra-processed ones, and not all processed and packed foods are necessarily ultra-processed products.

UPFs’ main characteristics are the use of ingredients and food additives to modify taste, texture, colour, appearance, and to produce shelf-life-stable products. Examples of these ingredients include, added sugars and sugar syrups, refined and modified starches, refined fats and oils, emulsifiers helping mix oil and water within the products such as lecithin, mono- and diglycerides, stabilisers and thickeners, flavourings, anti-caking and glazing agents, and high-intensity sweeteners.

UPFs are still safe to consume; however, in moderation. The main concern is not that the human body does not recognise them, but that frequent consumption leads to energy intake and the development of metabolic risks over time.

An Oman-specific study published in the scientific journal ‘Foods’ examined 221 food and beverage products purchased in the local markets in 2022. Nutritional composition, including fatty acids, carbohydrates, sugars and sodium, was analysed according to the NOVA food-processing classification system.

Findings showed 71.5 per cent of the products examined were classified as ultra-processed food products, while a further 16.7 per cent as processed foods, demonstrating the availability of these products to all age groups in the country with easy access.

Why it’s never too early to start protecting your heart

WE WORRY about many things when we are young: our weight, fitness, appearance, energy and whether we still fit into the clothes we bought a few years ago. Our heart is usually not high on the list. Most of us assume our heart is doing fine. It is beating, after all, and nothing seems to be complaining, so why worry about it?

Working in medicine has made me realise that heart health is not something we suddenly need to think about in our sixties. Cardiovascular risk factors can begin much earlier. This is not meant to frighten young people. We can do something now rather than wait until our hair turns grey and we suddenly treat our cholesterol result like an important exam result.

The heart, I have learned, remembers our habits, even the ones we would prefer it to forget. High blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol, diabetes, smoking and excess weight are important risk factors, and some are very quiet. You can feel healthy and still have high cholesterol or high blood pressure. You can be young and have diabetes too. These conditions did not receive the memo saying they should wait until we are older.

We sometimes hear the sad news that a young or healthy person ‘suddenly died’, while sleeping, talking, eating, driving, or exercising. People may say the heart stopped for no reason. There is usually a reason, however; the problem is that nobody knew about it beforehand.

Doctors call an unexpected death caused by the heart sudden cardiac death (SCD). It may result from a dangerous abnormal rhythm, an undiagnosed heart condition, an inherited electrical problem, or a problem with the heart muscle.



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Sometimes there are warning signs; sometimes there are none.

Sudden cardiac death in young people is uncommon, and not every sudden death is caused by the heart. But feeling healthy and being healthy are not always the same thing. Our bodies do not always send a warning, and when they do, we may not recognise it or may choose to ignore it.

Knowing a few numbers can therefore be useful: your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol. They may not be as exciting as your bank balance, number of followers or the discount percentage in an online sale, but your heart may be more interested in them.

The American Heart Association calls its key measures of cardiovascular health ‘Life’s Essential 8’, covering diet, activity, nicotine, sleep, weight, cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure. Nothing glamorous, no miracle drink, no expensive supplement, no secret recipe from someone’s great-grandmother. No five-minute shortcut either. It is the simple advice we already know but sometimes hope science will replace it with something easier.

Smoking deserves special attention because being young does not give our blood vessels a special shield against tobacco. Avoiding smoking, or stopping if you already smoke, is one of the most valuable things you can do for your future heart.

Family history matters too. Tell your doctor if a parent or sibling developed heart disease at a relatively young age, as it may be a reason to assess your risk earlier. We cannot choose the genes our parents give us, but fortunately, our genes do not get the final word.

Modern life is not always very heart-friendly either. We drive more,

sit more, order more and somehow walk less. Our phones carefully count our steps while giving us endless reasons not to take any. Technology really has thought of everything.

Sleep and exercise matter too. Most adults should aim for seven to nine hours of sleep a night and around 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week and a brisk 30-minute walk on most days can help.

I know that health advice can sometimes sound exhausting: exercise regularly, eat healthily, sleep well, avoid stress and keep a healthy weight, while somehow also working, looking after the family, paying the bills and enjoying life.

But real life does not work like that. You do not have to become a health saint overnight. Walk more, take the stairs, find an activity you enjoy, eat well most of the time, avoid smoking and try to sleep enough. Small changes may not look impressive, but your heart will thank you for them.

Significant chest pressure, heaviness, or tightness should never be dismissed because someone is young, especially with shortness of breath, sweating, nausea, or discomfort spreading to the arm, jaw, or back. It may be something else, but this is not the time for ‘Let’s wait until tomorrow and see.’

The message is simple: we do not need to wait until we are older to look after our hearts. Heart health is not built by one salad or one enthusiastic week at the gym. It is built quietly over years through the choices we repeat.

We spend so much time planning our future careers, families, holidays, houses and all the things we hope to enjoy. Our heart deserves a place in those plans. It has been working 24 hours a day, so do take care of it before it decides to take an unapproved holiday.

We spend so much time planning our future careers, families, holidays, houses and all the things we hope to enjoy. Our heart deserves a place in those plans

What charity we carry in our lives



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

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translator and
communications
professional

WHAT DOES charity mean to you? For some, it is a hand reaching into a pocket and giving money to someone in need. For others, it is a meal placed at a neighbour’s door, a schoolbag given to a child, a hospital bill paid for a stranger, or a contribution made to a cause that touches the heart.

Sometimes, charity is simply noticing someone around. It is asking an elderly neighbour, “Do you need anything?” It is giving way to a stranger in a crowded road. It is helping a colleague without reminding them that you helped. It is forgiving when you have every reason to hold on to anger.

Perhaps we often imagine charity as something that happens on a particular day, through a particular campaign, when someone asks us to donate. But charity can live quietly in the smallest corners of ordinary life. It can happen on a morning commute, in a classroom, at a workplace, in a family conversation, or between two strangers who may never meet again.

Charity is not always what we give. Sometimes, it is how we choose to live the value of small gestures. A smile and a kind word cost nothing; giving someone your time costs nothing but attention, and helping someone stand after they fall requires little more than a hand.

All these seemingly insignificant moments

can become more important in the life of another person.

We rarely know what someone is carrying behind a quiet face. The person standing beside us may be struggling with something we cannot see. A simple act of kindness may not change the world, but it may change their life that day.

Charity asks us to think beyond the moment. If we give someone food, we address hunger today. If we help someone acquire an education, we may change their tomorrow. If we teach a skill, create an opportunity, or help someone become financially independent, the impact can continue long after the original act of generosity has been forgotten. This is where sustainable charity becomes meaningful.

The question is no longer only, “What can I give?” but “What can I give that will continue giving?” A scholarship can become a career; a skill can become a livelihood; a small business opportunity can become a family’s independence; a community project can serve generations, and an environmental initiative can protect a place for people we will never know.

Charity has many faces. There is a child who shares his lunch with a classmate. There is a mother who prepares an extra meal because she knows another family is struggling. There is a student who helps another student understand a difficult lesson.

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There is a worker who spends his weekend volunteering instead of staying home. There is a person who chooses not to respond to anger with anger. All of these are forms of charity. Some are visible while others will never be photographed, announced, or recognised.

It has been said that a life is measured by what it leaves behind. Therefore, we should continue to give when people need help. We should continue to support charitable organisations and community initiatives. We should continue to stand beside those facing difficult circumstances.

But we can also ask ourselves: What kind of goodness do we want to leave behind? Because one day, our possessions will belong to someone else; our positions will be filled by others, and our names may disappear from documents and memories. But the good we have done may continue.

A child may remember the teacher who believed in them. A family may remember the stranger who helped them when they had nowhere else to turn. Years from now, someone may be living a better life because of something we once did without expecting anything in return.

That is the quiet miracle of charity; it travels further than we can see. Though sometimes we tend to associate charity with what is visible: donations, fundraising events and community initiatives!

TRUMP TURNS TO GOLF, FAMILY BUSINESS ON IRISH VISIT’S SECOND DAY

PETER HUTCHISON AND AURELIA END

Donald Trump turned his focus on Sunday to golf and promoting his business interests, as he wraps up a two-day visit to Ireland during which his off-the-cuff diplomacy has caused another stir.

The US president caught his Irish hosts and the neighbouring UK off-guard on Saturday when he waded into highly sensitive political territory by announcing he would “love to see” a united Ireland. Breaking with Washington’s traditional neutrality on the historically charged topic, Trump argued reunification of the Republic of Ireland and UK territory Northern Ireland — after more than a century apart — was “going to happen eventually”.

“It may as well happen now,” he ventured as he met Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin in Dublin, prompting pushback from pro-UK loyalists in Northern Ireland and some leading politicians in mainland Britain.

“Donald Trump is Donald Trump and the president will say and speak his mind as he sees it,” UK minister Angela Rayner said.

“But look, we’re really serious about the Good Friday Agreement,” she added, referring to the 1998 peace accords that largely ended three decades of sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland.

It stipulates that a referendum on Irish unity can be held if the UK government determines a majority there is likely in favour. Republic of Ireland voters would also need to back it in a separate poll. Within hours of his surprise intervention on the issue, Trump had touched down in Doonbeg, on the country’s west coast, where his Trump Organisation-owned golf course is hosting the Irish Open.

The American leader will attend the tournament again - the main reason for the trip - before later departing for Washington.

Roads were closed and police checkpoints installed near the resort. Around 30 people protested Trump’s visit in nearby Doonbeg village.

Outside the course’s clubhouse, several curious golf fans gathered hoping to catch a glimpse of the president. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” 28-year-old Connor McGovern said.

Trump is joined in the remote corner of Ireland by his two sons, Eric and Don Jr, who have managed the family business since their 80-year-old father returned to the White House last year.

The former real estate magnate, who promotes its enterprises at every opportunity, told Martin that Doonbeg was “one of the greatest courses in the world”. Martin assured him at Saturday’s meeting that Doonbeg’s 784 residents were “very grateful” for the Trump Organisation’s investment there after it bought the site in 2014. Some 40,000 fans are expected at the tournament over the weekend, with local hero Shane Lowry favourite to win. Trump’s attendance adds an extra layer of complexity to a security effort that is reportedly costing Ireland 20 million euros. — AFP

The illusion of agreement

TEN PEOPLE are sitting together when one declares: “Prices are outrageous.” The other nine nod. They appear to agree. Yet one is thinking about the cost of rice, another about the rent, and a third about a salary that no longer lasts until the end of the month. One blames profiteering retailers; another points to a weakening currency; a third invokes war and energy prices. One wants price controls, another higher wages, and a third greater competition.

They have uttered the same sentence. Each has said something different in his own mind.

We tend to imagine that words carry thoughts as vessels carry water: I place an idea inside a sentence, pass it to you, and it arrives as it left me. But language does not transport a thought whole, nor does it summon the same picture in every listener. It creates enough common ground for conversation to proceed, while concealing the differences beneath it.

“High prices” sounds like the name of a single condition. In reality, it gathers together many changes: some prices rise while others remain stable; some incomes increase while others lose value; one household’s necessities are another’s dispensable purchases. To call the rises “outrageous” adds a standard and a judgement.

It assumes a normal price has been exceeded beyond what is acceptable. But acceptable to whom? Measured against which income, which year and which necessities?

We need names because we cannot hold every detail in our minds at once. The danger begins when we forget what the name has omitted. The map becomes the territory, and the clarity of the word is mistaken for the completeness of the thought.

Language may not remove our ignorance. It may merely transfer it from a complicated phenomenon to a familiar term. We say a man does not work because he is lazy, then offer his failure to work as proof of his laziness. We call a general rise in prices “inflation”, then behave as though naming the movement has explained the forces behind it.

Words circle the event and give us the impression that they



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have penetrated it. Explanations, moreover, do not occur to us with equal ease. The language we inherit is not merely a vocabulary of things. It is also a hidden vocabulary of causes.

Culture supplies familiar plots in which to arrange events: an actor desires something, acts, and produces a result. It is therefore easy to say that prices have risen because traders are greedy. The sentence gives us a person to picture, a motive to understand and a culprit to blame. Exchange rates, debt, energy costs, production, expectations and supply chains do not sit together behind the shop counter.

The shopkeeper may indeed be greedy. He may exploit scarcity to increase his margin. But turning one contributor into a complete explanation reveals our preference for causes with faces. A single cause is easy to narrate. Interacting causes have no sole author, begin at no single moment and end with no obvious defendant.

Explanations do not become dominant in a vacuum. They are shaped by history, education, the media and institutional language. Official rhetoric may bring the profiteering trader to the front of the picture, just as the trader may make global turmoil responsible for every increase.

The customer sees the price label. He does not see the ship, the currency market, the bank, the energy bill, the tax and the wage. What is visible is immediate; what is hidden requires concepts capable of assembling its scattered parts.

The same expression can therefore enter different networks of meaning. One society’s public conversation may associate rising prices primarily with hoarding merchants, another’s with central-bank policy, and another’s with a war that has disrupted trade. These pictures are not produced by words alone.

Historical experience, institutions and available knowledge all influence what enters the field of vision and what remains at its edges.

The cost of living is only one example. Public life is crowded with words that appear to command agreement: freedom, reform, participation, justice.

Freedom may mean that the

state leaves a person alone, or that society gives him the practical means to choose. Participation may mean being allowed to speak, being consulted, or possessing an actual share in a decision. Reform may mean replacing office-holders, changing the rules by which they govern, or restoring an earlier order that someone regards as authentic.

Such meanings do not come from dictionaries alone. They are formed by families, schools, markets, public institutions and collective experiences of security, disorder, justice and abuse. A word may have an exact lexical equivalent in another language without carrying across the historical experience that gave it weight. People exchange the same term without standing in the same place when they pronounce it.

Here lies the illusion of agreement. We hear familiar words, fill them with our own experience, then attribute the resulting picture to the speaker. We understand what the word means to us and assume that we understand what he means by it.

The illusion survives for as long as agreement remains verbal. It breaks when action begins. Those who agreed on reform divide over the first proposed change. Those who praised participation quarrel over the first decision. Those who nodded at the claim that prices were outrageous discover that they share neither a diagnosis nor a remedy.

Agreement on a sentence is not necessarily agreement on a conception; agreement on a conception is not necessarily agreement on what should be done. Yet public debate regularly leaps from words to decisions, as though repeating the same terms meant that we had seen the same reality and understood its causes.

We cannot think without classifying or speak without leaving something out. The danger is not that language abbreviates; no sentence can contain the whole of what it describes.

The danger begins when we forget what our words have excluded, mistake the popularity of an explanation for evidence of its truth, and build a collective position upon terms whose meaning we have never tested.

Real understanding may begin when everyone stops nodding.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Referees Sultan al Siyabi and Salem al Siyabi

HANDBALL REFEREES PREPARE FOR NEW SEASON AT CENTRAL SEMINAR

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 13



ABDULRIDHA AL SHEIKH
Chairman of the Referees Committee

The Oman Handball Association, represented by its Referees Committee, held a central seminar for referees across different grades yesterday, Sunday, as part of preparations for the 2026/2027 sports season. The seminar brought together 35 referees,

including both men and women, and was held at the meeting and conference hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The event was held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Mushaifri, Deputy Chairman of the Athletes' Preparation Centres Committee at the Oman Handball Association.

The seminar was led by Abdulridha bin Mohammed al Sheikh, Chairman of the Referees Committee, and Asian lecturer Zuher Khalid Samha, a refereeing expert and acting technical expert at the association. The programme covered a range of technical and organisational topics aimed at strengthening the readiness of refereeing teams ahead of the new season.

The seminar forms part of the association's ongoing efforts to develop the refereeing system, improve the technical standards of referees and ensure greater consistency in the interpretation and application of the Laws of the Game.

A key focus of the programme was the need to maintain a unified approach among referees when making decisions during matches, particularly in light of recent developments and amendments to the handball laws. The latest changes were explained in detail, with discussions focusing on how they should be applied during competitions.

The participants also reviewed the competition calendar for the 2026/2027 season, as well as regulations governing player age groups in youth competitions. The session addressed the eligibility of four youth players to participate in the junior category and the regulations allowing youth players to represent first teams in the First and Second Division competitions, subject to the approved rules and conditions.

The seminar also provided an opportunity to review the main positives from the 2025/2026 season, while examining the challenges, observations and shortcomings that emerged during last season's competitions. The discussions aimed to identify practical solutions and ensure that previous issues are addressed before the start of the new campaign.

The new season will feature eight major competitions: the Junior League, Youth League, Super Cup, First Division, Second Division, Association Cup, Beach Handball League and Women's League.

The organisers stressed that the seminar was not limited to technical matters, but also sought to strengthen communication and cooperation between the Referees Committee and refereeing teams throughout the season.

The event concluded with an open discussion in which referees presented their suggestions, ideas and initiatives for improving competitions and further developing the refereeing system.

The association hopes that the preparatory programme will contribute to a higher level of refereeing performance and help ensure consistent decision-making across all competitions during the 2026/2027 season.

Al Nasr claim top spot after Al Musannah victory



The win lifted Al Nasr to nine points from three matches.

AHMED AL KAABI
SALALAH, SEPT 13

AL NASR moved to the top of the Jindal League standings after securing a 2-0 victory over Al Musannah at Al Saada Sports Complex in Salalah on Saturday, in their rescheduled third-round match of the 2026-27 season.

The win lifted Al Nasr to nine points from three matches, maintaining their perfect start to the campaign, while Al Musannah remained near the bottom of the table after another difficult outing.

Al Nasr went into the match with clear attacking intent and enjoyed the better share of possession during the early stages, but Al Musannah also had their moments on the counter. The visitors nearly struck in the fifth minute when Hazza al Mushaifri tested Al Nasr goalkeeper Ibrahim al Rajhi with a dangerous effort, but the custodian reacted well to keep the score level.

Al Musannah threatened again in the 15th minute through Darwish al Saadi, whose attempt forced another important save from Al Rajhi, who turned the ball away for a corner. Those early chances gave Al Musannah confidence, but Al Nasr gradually regained control and began to use the spaces on transition.

The breakthrough arrived in the 25th minute. Mohammed Abdulkhakeem Bait Sabee received the ball during a quick counter-attack, drove into the penalty area and finished past Al Musannah goalkeeper Al Mutasim al Balushi to give Al Nasr a 1-0 lead.

Both teams continued to exchange attacks for the remainder of the first half, but neither side managed to add to the score before the interval.

Al Musannah returned for the second half with greater urgency and came close to equalising in the 57th minute when Darwish al Saadi broke forward and struck at goal, only for Al Rajhi to produce another strong save. The visitors increased their pressure and threatened again in the 67th



Al Nasr secured a third consecutive victory, taking the top spot in the standings after defeating visiting Al-Musannah in the round's fixtures.

minute through Musab al Lamki, whose shot went over the crossbar.

Al Nasr almost doubled their lead in the 69th minute when foreign player Afando found space on the counter, but Al Mutasim al Balushi kept Al Musannah in the game with a fine stop. Two minutes later, Al Musannah wasted one of their best chances as substitute Abdulaziz al Manwari broke through, but his effort went wide.

Al Nasr also came close in the 78th minute when substitute Osama Magdy hit the post with a powerful attempt. The decisive second goal eventually came in the 90th minute, as Awadh al Shahri finished off a pass from Osama Magdy to seal the victory.

Al Musannah tried to reduce the deficit in stoppage time, but Al Nasr managed the closing moments well to complete a clean-sheet win and strengthen their position at the top of the league.



Al Maamari: We combined the experience of Oman’s golden generation with a new generation of trainers

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 13

OMANI owned horse Qaed Al Thanaa claimed an impressive 12th-place finish at the World Endurance Championship for eight-year-old horses in Portugal, highlighting Oman’s presence at one of the most demanding events in international endurance racing.

Organised by the International Equestrian Federation in Barroca d’Alva, Portugal, the 120 km championship featured 109 horses from 26 countries. The race was divided into four stages of 40 km, 30 km, 30 km and 20 km.

Qaed Al Thanaa completed the full distance at an average speed of 21.03 km per hour, steadily improving his position throughout the competition. He was 35th after the first stage, moved to 26th after the second and 18th after the third before finishing 12th overall.

The horse competed as part of an Omani-French partnership combining the experience of Omani trainer Abdullah bin Saeed al Balushi, who previously supervised the famous Jabal Al Rais during its golden period, with AA Stables and French trainer Elizabeth Hardy.

Owner Anis bin Mohammed al Maamari said the World Championship was not an isolated target but part of a long-term project aimed at returning Al Rais Stud to top-level endurance competition.

“We wanted to combine the accumulated experience of Oman’s golden generation with the enthusiasm and knowledge of a new generation of Omani trainers, while also benefiting from international expertise,” Al Maamari said.

The team studied a number of leading French endurance horses before selecting Qaed Al Thanaa based on pedigree, physical structure, development potential and qualifying results. The aim, he said, was not to buy a horse for one race, but to build a long-term sporting project around him.

A key step came at Compiegne, France, on June 21, 2026, where Qaed Al Thanaa competed with rider Inza in a two-star 120 km race. He finished 11th at an average speed of 18.1 km per hour, securing his qualification for the World Championship.

Al Maamari said the team travelled to Portugal not simply to participate, but to measure its progress against the best horses in the world. The difficulty of the competition was underlined by the fact that only 56 of the 109 starters completed the race, while 53 were eliminated.

He said finishing 12th was therefore a significant achievement, particularly given the horse’s steady progress through the stages.

The championship also featured another Omani participation involving trainer Saeed bin Salim al Balushi, who entered two horses he had qualified for the World Championship for young horses. His twin sons, Moayad and Muhannad, rode the horses with the support of owner Mundhir al Barwani, representing Blue Stable and Oman.

Although the riders were unable to complete the competition as hoped, their participation marked an important first appearance at the World Championship. Al Balushi and Al Barwani stressed that the result was not the end of their journey.

They expressed confidence that the team has the ability to reach the leading positions in future competitions and continue qualifying horses capable of competing at the highest international level.

For Al Maamari, the World Championship is only the beginning. Qaed Al Thanaa is still eight years old, and his performances in France and Portugal have provided encouraging signs of further development.

The immediate priority, he said, is recovery before the Omani and French technical teams review the season and prepare the next programme.

“Jabal Al Rais gave us unforgettable memories, but we are not trying to replicate him. We wanted to revive the spirit that created that successful era,” Al Maamari said. “Qaed Al Thanaa is the first real result of combining that experience with a new generation and international expertise. We have built a strong foundation, and there is still much more to achieve.”

QAED AL THANAA FINISHES



Moayad
bin Saeed al
Balushi

IN WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP



Organised by the International Equestrian Federation in Barroca d’Alva, Portugal, the 120 km championship featured 109 horses from 26 countries.



Qaed Al Thanaa finished 12th at an average speed of 18.1 km per hour, securing his qualification for the World Championship.

SPORTS

CHAMPIONS Arsenal made it 12 points out 12 as they ground out a 2-0 victory at Sunderland on Saturday to move clear at the top of the Premier League table but Liverpool and Chelsea, both tipped as title challengers, were held to draws.

David Raya's penalty save in the 55th minute proved crucial for Arsenal who went ahead two minutes later with Bruno Guimaraes's first goal for the club.

Bukayo Saka then wrapped up the victory deep in stoppage time from the penalty spot.

Liverpool's stuttering start to the league season continued as they drew 0-0 at home to Fulham while Chelsea required a Joao Pedro equaliser in the second half to salvage a 2-2 draw at home to surprise package Hull City.

Aston Villa scored their first league goal of the season but went down 2-1 at home to Nottingham Forest while Ipswich Town snatched a 3-2 victory at 10-man Crystal Palace.

Bournemouth drew 2-2 at home to Brentford and shot-shy Tottenham Hotspur remained the only side in the top flight without a goal after drawing 0-0 at home to Everton.

It is the first time in Tottenham's history that they have failed to score in their first four league games of a season.

ARSENAL RESILIENCE Once again Arsenal showed the resilience that took them to their first title in 22 years last season.

Sunderland proved a handful and should have gone in front early on when Dan Ballard flashed a chance wide.

The hosts were awarded a penalty when Ezri Konsa dragged down Ballard in the box but Raya tipped Enzo Le Fee's spot kick against the post. Two minutes later second-half substitute Guimaraes curled a stunning finish past Robin Roefs.

Sunderland pressed for an equaliser but Saka finished them off with a penalty after Reinildo Mandava brought him down and was shown a second yellow card.

Liverpool have now drawn three of their opening four Premier League games under new manager Andoni Iraola and they could have few complaints after a flat display against a Fulham side who earned their first point of the season.

The closest they came to a breakthrough was a Victor Munoz header against the crossbar in the first half.

Iraola said the exertions of Wednesday's Champions League win over Atletico Madrid were not an excuse.

"This will be the season," he said. "We need to find ways of winning games and find moments to score and win these type of games that are close.

"Clearly we lack some freshness and didn't have the moments to create and it has cost us. All in all it has not been a good performance."



Liverpool's Alexander Isak reacts. — Reuters

REAL THREAT IN ATTACK Chelsea's habit of scoring early goals and conceding bad ones continued as record signing Morgan Rogers put them ahead after seven minutes at Stamford Bridge.

But while Xabi Alonso's side looked a real threat in attack, their defending let them down again as Mohamed Belloumi struck twice for the visitors before half-time.

Newly-promoted Hull were heading for the top of the table until Joao Pedro slammed in a 66th-minute equaliser from Cole Palmer's assist to spare his side's blushes.

"We need to be more solid and be more controlled. New players and new staff. This is the process. In a few months I'm sure we'll be able to control better," Alonso said.

Hull remain third with eight points, one behind Arsenal and Manchester City while Chelsea have seven points.

Liam Delap scored his first goal for Nottingham Forest since his £50-million (\$67.59-million) move from Chelsea to give his side the lead at Villa Park but Villa finally registered with Alysso's first goal for the club, the Brazilian nodding in John McGinn's cross.

Forest grabbed their first win at Villa for 32 years in the 88th minute though as Igor Jesus finished from close range from a Morgan Gibbs-White flick.

Promoted Ipswich secured their second win of the season with an enthralling 3-2 victory at Crystal Palace.

Anan Khalaili put Palace ahead from Daichi Kamada's pass but Emersonn headed Ipswich level from a Leif Davis cross.

Axel Disasi was red-carded before half-time for a reckless foul on Jack Clarke and Davis struck again on the stroke of half-time. Palace thought they had rescued a point with Jorgen Strand Larsen's stunning finish but Zian Flemming pounced in stoppage time to send the away fans into raptures.

New Bournemouth manager Marco Rose is still waiting for his first Premier League victory.

Bournemouth hit back from Kevin Schade's opener to lead with goals by Justin Kluivert and Marcus Tavernier but Schade's lob maintained Brentford's unbeaten start. — Reuters



Chelsea's Morgan Rogers and Cole Palmer look dejected after the match. — Reuters



Sunderland's Reinildo fouls Arsenal's Bukayo Saka to concede a penalty and receive a second yellow card. — Reuters

- Arsenal make it four wins from four
- Third draw in four games for Liverpool
- Hull maintain great start with draw at Chelsea
- Forest win late on at Villa
- Ipswich beat 10-man Crystal Palace

ARSENAL
STAY
PERFECT,
LIVERPOOL
AND CHELSEA
BOTH HELD
TO DRAWS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

7,646.639

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



Premium motor gasoline (95) production increased 2.6 per cent to 8.32 million barrels from 8.11 million barrels.

OMAN REFINERY OUTPUT REACHES 129.08 MILLION BARRELS

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's refinery output fell 3.7 per cent year-on-year to 129.08 million barrels in the first seven months of 2026, as lower diesel and other refinery-product production outweighed gains in jet fuel and naphtha, preliminary official data showed.

Total motor fuel production declined 1.4 per cent in the period, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCISI).

Production of regular motor gasoline (91) fell 4.5 per cent to 9.63 million barrels from 10.09 million barrels a year earlier. Sales dropped 4.6 per cent to 10.04 million barrels, while exports rose 9.8 per cent to 1.98 million barrels.

Premium motor gasoline (95) production increased 2.6 per cent to 8.32 million barrels from 8.11 million barrels.

Sales, however, fell 10.6 per cent to 8.86 million barrels, while exports declined 33.9 per cent to 362,900 barrels from 549,100 barrels. Diesel production dropped 6.8 per cent to 43.31 million barrels from 46.48 million barrels in the corresponding period of 2025.

Domestic sales declined 8.3 per cent to 11.11 million barrels, while exports fell 11.8 per cent to 33.33 million barrels.

Jet fuel was among the stronger-performing products, with production rising 12 per cent to 16.79 million barrels from 14.99 million barrels.

Jet fuel exports jumped 27.4 per cent to 14.52 million barrels from 11.39 million barrels, although domestic sales declined 9.2 per cent to 2.57 million barrels.

Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) production fell 3.3 per cent to 6.46 million barrels, while sales declined 22 per cent to 1.76 million barrels. LPG exports bucked the trend, rising 3.9 per cent to 2.06 million barrels.

Naphtha production increased 4.5 per cent to 22.61 million barrels from 21.65 million barrels. Sales rose 3.2 per cent to 8.33 million barrels, while exports climbed 2.6 per cent to 14.66 million barrels. — ONA

Non-oil exports rise 7.8%

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 13

OMANI merchandise exports fell 7.3 per cent to RO 23.228 billion, while imports rose 2.8 per cent to RO 17.313 billion, according to the Central Bank of Oman's newly released Annual Report 2025.

The merchandise trade surplus narrowed by 27.9 per cent to RO 5.914 billion, a decline of RO 2.286 billion on the year. On a balance of payments basis, the goods surplus fell 22.4 per cent to RO 7.733 billion, the Sultanate of Oman's apex bank stated.

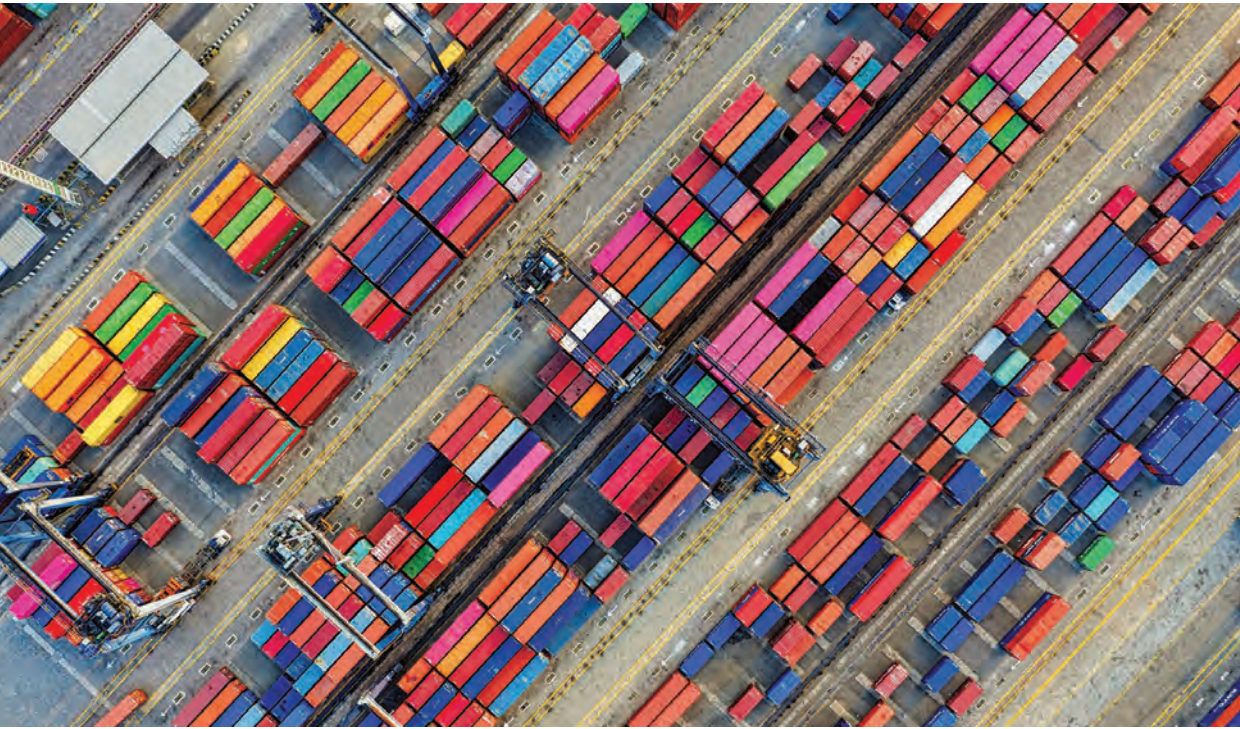
Crude oil exports declined 15.2 per cent to RO 8.403 billion; refinery exports fell 12.6 per cent to RO 4.089 billion and LNG exports dropped 20.2 per cent to RO 2.017 billion. Crude export volumes were broadly unchanged at 306.7 million barrels, confirming that the fall was price-driven.

Non-hydrocarbon exports of Omani origin rose 7.8 per cent to RO 6.715 billion, lifted by machinery and mechanical appliances, which more than doubled with growth of 108.9 per cent to RO 567.6 million, chemical products, up 12.9 per cent, and base metals, up 9.4 per cent. The non-oil export price index rose 1.2 per cent over the year.

Re-exports grew 17.2 per cent to RO 2.002 billion, which the central bank attributed to Oman's expanding role in facilitating regional trade flows and the spillover benefits generated for transport, warehousing and customs services.

The UAE, Saudi Arabia and India remained the principal destinations for non-oil exports, taking 19.5 per cent, 15.9 per cent and 10.4 per cent respectively.

Re-export activity stayed concentrated in the UAE at 36.1 per cent, followed by Iran at 18.2 per cent and Saudi Arabia at 9.5 per cent. The UAE was also Oman's largest source of imports at 24.1 per cent, ahead of China at 11.3 per cent and Kuwait at 7.7 per cent. Recorded imports increased 2.5 per cent to RO 17.124 billion, driven by vehicles,



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aircraft and vessels, up 25.6 per cent, machinery, up 5.2 per cent and vegetable products, up 5.8 per cent. Mineral product imports fell 9.1 per cent.

The central bank said the composition of import growth suggested purchases were increasingly linked to expanding productive capacity rather than current consumption.

Trade openness, measured as exports plus imports relative to GDP, edged down to 96.2 per cent from 101.7 per cent in 2024.

The services deficit narrowed 1.2 per cent to RO 2.718 billion as receipts rose 3.5 per cent to RO 2.244 billion on stronger telecommunications, travel and insurance earnings, while payments increased 0.9 per cent to RO 4,962.1 million. The travel deficit widened 46.6 per cent to RO 37.6 million on higher outbound spending.

The primary income deficit narrowed 19.3 per cent, with investment income receipts rising 63.5 per cent to RO 564.1 million on stronger returns from direct and portfolio assets, while investment income payments fell 8.2 per cent. Secondary income outflows, mainly workers' remittances, rose 2.7 per cent to RO 3.665.5 billion; personal transfers by expatriate workers

increased 3.1 per cent.

The financial account recorded a net inflow of RO 679.4 million, against a net outflow of RO 1.548.2 billion in 2024. Direct investment remained the largest source of financing, with net inflows of RO 2.651 billion, down from RO 3.601.4 billion.

Portfolio investment posted a net outflow of RO 1.594 billion, while other investments swung to a net inflow of RO 32.8 million from an outflow of RO 3.301 billion a year earlier.

Reserve assets held by the CBO together with liquid foreign assets held by the Oman Investment Authority rose by RO 409.8 million during the year.

The stock of CBO reserve assets reached RO 7.475 billion at end-2025, providing gross import cover of 5.2 months. The stock of inward foreign direct investment reached approximately RO 31.4 billion by end-2025, according to National Centre for Statistics and Information data cited in the report, with oil and gas exploration accounting for 81 per cent.

The United Kingdom remained the largest investor at RO 16.5 billion, or about 52 per cent of the total, followed by the United States at RO 8.4 billion and Kuwait at RO 1.4 billion.

O-Green targets 200 MW of AI-ready data centre capacity by 2028

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 13

Omani state-backed integrated clean energy platform O-Green is rapidly expanding into AI-ready computing infrastructure, targeting more than 200 MW of data centre capacity across Oman and other international markets by 2028. The move adds a significant new dimension to O-Green's diversifying portfolio, positioning data centres and high-performance computing as a downstream extension of its growing presence in renewable power generation and energy storage.

"O-Green is developing AI-ready data-centre projects across Oman, Spain and other markets, with more than 200 MW targeted to be ready for service by 2028", the company said in a recent update.

The strategy seeks to capitalise on one of the biggest challenges confronting the global expansion



The move positions data centres and high-performance computing as a downstream extension of O-Green's growing presence in renewable power generation and energy storage.

of artificial intelligence: securing large volumes of reliable and increasingly low-carbon electricity to power energy-intensive data centres. O-Green's proposition is underpinned by an expanding clean-energy portfolio encompassing solar photovoltaic and wind generation as well as battery energy storage systems

(BESS). The platform says its development portfolio exceeds 11 GW across 12 countries, giving it a potentially significant clean-power foundation on which to develop AI, cloud and hyperscale computing infrastructure.

In Oman, that model is particularly evident in O-Green's planned 2.7 GW Continuous Renewable Energy project spanning Al Duqm and Mahout.

Combining solar, wind and battery storage, the project is designed to provide around 770 MW of firm renewable power, with data centres and advanced computing among the energy-intensive industries identified as potential beneficiaries.

By combining complementary solar and wind generation with large-scale battery storage, O-Green aims to overcome the intermittency traditionally associated with renewable electricity and provide the dependable power supply

required by always-on computing infrastructure.

Its broader Omani portfolio also includes solar capacity at Suhar Industrial City and wind development at Al Duqm, alongside plans to establish renewable-energy technology manufacturing capabilities.

The emerging data centre strategy therefore points to a vertically integrated model in which O-Green's competitive advantage extends beyond developing computing facilities themselves.

Access to renewable generation, storage, land and supporting infrastructure could enable the group to offer increasingly integrated clean-energy and compute solutions.

The push also aligns with Oman's ambition to develop a domestic ecosystem around green data centres, artificial intelligence, high-performance computing and advanced digital infrastructure.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



BankDhofar continues to implement a range of digital initiatives aimed at simplifying processes.

BANKDHOFAR
DELIVERS ADVANCED
DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

MUSCAT: In a world where digital transformation is accelerating and customer needs and expectations continue to evolve, technology has become one of the most significant factors determining the ability of financial institutions to compete and grow.

In Oman, BankDhofar stands out as a leading example of a bank that has embraced digital transformation as a long-term strategic priority, placing innovation at the heart of its operations and services.

Digital transformation in the banking sector is no longer limited to providing services through mobile applications and online platforms. It now encompasses the complete redesign of the customer experience, the modernisation of technological infrastructure and the adoption of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing and data analytics across various banking functions. In this context, BankDhofar continues to implement a range of digital initiatives aimed at simplifying processes, improving operational efficiency and delivering faster, more flexible services to retail customers, businesses and government entities.

The importance of this approach is further highlighted by the rapid shift towards a digital economy, where modern business environments require banking systems capable of seamless integration with a variety of digital platforms.

To meet these needs, BankDhofar has developed an advanced ecosystem based on Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), enabling businesses and institutions to connect directly with banking systems and execute financial transactions securely and in real time.

This integration enhances cash flow management, reduces manual processes and provides instant access to data, allowing organisations to make faster and more informed decisions.

Within the corporate banking sector, services are undergoing a significant transformation driven by automation and digitisation. In response, the Bank has expanded its suite of digital solutions tailored to business customers. Alongside cash management, trade finance and electronic payment services, BankDhofar has launched the Neo CIB Corporate Internet Banking platform, offering a comprehensive digital experience that combines ease of use with enhanced flexibility.

The platform enables businesses to manage accounts, payments and various banking requests through a modern interactive interface supported by real-time information that facilitates decision-making.

The Kia Tasman: Built to
conquer every terrain

KIA Oman continues its “New Identity, New Savings” campaign, this time turning the spotlight onto the Tasman — the brand's newest and boldest entry into the pickup segment and a truck engineered from the ground up to master any terrain Oman can throw at it.

Customers who choose the Tasman this season can enjoy a welcome bonus of up to RO 600 that is adjusted directly against the vehicle price. Ownership is made even more rewarding with a service package covering 30,000 km and a full year of complimentary registration (Terms & Conditions apply).

The Tasman is engineered with a robust body-on-frame platform built to hold up under the harshest conditions and for genuine load-carrying resilience.

The flagship 2.5-litre turbocharged engine delivers 277 HP, sent through an 8-speed automatic transmission, giving the Tasman the muscle to tackle steep climbs and heavy loads with confidence. A 2.2-litre turbo, diesel variant is also available for those who prioritize long-range efficiency.

With its 4WD system, no landscape is off-limits for the Tasman. It offers dedicated driving modes to match the terrain underfoot, while a dedicated X-Trek mode and an electronic differential locking system, help it push through the toughest obstacles.

Additionally, you also get good ground clearance of 252 mm resulting in fewer places the Tasman can’t reach.

When the path gets tricky, drivers are backed by a full suite of visibility tech: the surround view monitor and rear-view camera give a clear picture of the vehicle's immediate surroundings, while the Ground



With its 4WD system, no landscape is off-limits for the Tasman.

View Monitoring (GVM) — a virtual under-body camera, lets drivers see the terrain beneath the front wheels, making it easier to place the Tasman precisely over rocks and obstacles that would otherwise be hidden from view.

Inside, the double cabin tells you an entirely different story — one of comfort, luxury and modern design.

A panoramic digital display merges a 12.3-inch infotainment screen with a 4-inch digital instrument cluster and a 5 inch HVAC display, while wireless smartphone

charging, dual-automatic climate control and artificial leather seating with ventilation keep every trip feeling comfortable and premium, regardless of the terrain outside.

Safety runs deep across the Tasman, with features including Blind-Spot Collision Avoidance Assist (BCA), Lane Keeping/Following Assist, Multi-Collision Brake (MCB), Trailer Stability Assist (TSA) and Smart Cruise Control to add further reassurance during long journeys, keeping the driver firmly in command however the journey unfolds.

ROX begins production at new manufacturing centre

MUSCAT: ROX has started vehicle production at its newly completed manufacturing centre, marking a step forward in the company's global expansion. The first production units have rolled off the line, with deliveries to customers set to begin shortly.

The facility brings together manufacturing, AI development and design under one operation. The newly-established ROX AI Lab will serve as the base for the company's outdoor AI platform, ROX AGENT, while the Design Studio will integrate regional customer insights and cultural perspectives into future vehicle development.

“We are building a manufacturing and innovation base that allows us to respond faster to our customers and scale our presence around the



The facility brings together manufacturing, AI development and design under one operation.

world”, said Jarvis, Founder and CEO of ROX. “This is about making our global operations more agile and more connected to the markets we serve”. ROX also announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with

Etihad Airways to explore future collaboration across travel, mobility and lifestyle experiences.

The partnership will begin with the Africa Grand Tour S2, an overland expedition across Africa featuring the first

production vehicles. Etihad's brand will be displayed on the vehicles, with both companies developing co-branded content around the journey.

Antonoaldo Neves, Chief Executive Officer of Etihad Airways, said: “The Africa Grand Tour brings together travel, mobility and storytelling in a way that creates natural opportunities for both brands. We look forward to exploring where a future collaboration could lead”.

ROX is now present in more than 60 markets across the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and Europe, with cumulative global sales surpassing 40,000 vehicles. The new centre is expected to support further growth as the company expands its retail and service network across regions.

NBO invests in Oman’s future workforce

MUSCAT: As part of its continued commitment to developing national talents and supporting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) has successfully concluded the Summer Window of its 2026 Internship Programme, welcoming 68 university students from across Oman to gain practical experience across the bank's divisions and branch networks.

The internship programme is a structured and closely managed development programme, designed to provide participants with meaningful workplace exposure rather than traditional short-term work experience. Over a two-month period, interns were provided with practical exposure to the banking sector, supported by structured



The 2026 internship programme welcomes 68 university students from across Oman.

learning, development activities and ongoing guidance from NBO employees and programme coordinators. Alongside their day-to-day assignments, participants

took part in career-readiness and professional development activities aimed at strengthening their confidence, commercial awareness, workplace behaviours

and future skills. Through internal events, volunteering and employee engagement initiatives, they were also able to experience NBO's collaborative culture while developing teamwork, communication and leadership capabilities.

The internship programme forms part of a broader suite of national talent and early-career programmes launched by NBO, including dedicated programmes for university graduates and diploma holders.

Collectively, these programmes are designed to create sustainable pathways into employment, strengthen the pipeline of work-ready Omani talent and contribute to national priorities for skills development and employment under Oman Vision 2040.

Building on these initiatives, NBO is also preparing to launch a fourth programme specifically targeting Omani job seekers.

The programme will focus on enhancing employability by equipping participants with practical workplace capabilities, future skills and greater awareness of employer expectations.

It is intended to help participants better prepare for employment opportunities across the wider labour market, extending NBO's contribution to national talent development beyond recruitment into the bank itself.

The bank's approach reflects its belief that developing national talent requires sustained investment at different stages of the education-to-employment journey.

SHORTTAKES



The projects include new and upgraded substations, additional 33-kV feeders and network automation.

NAMA INVESTS
20.5 MILLION IN
AL DAKHILIYAH GRID

NIZWA: Nama Electricity Distribution is implementing electricity infrastructure projects worth more than RO 20.497 million across Al Dakhiliyah Governorate as it seeks to strengthen grid capacity and reliability amid urban and population growth.

The projects include new and upgraded substations, additional 33-kV feeders and network automation, as well as infrastructure designed to support renewable-energy integration and digital management of the distribution network.

Yousuf bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Head of Technical Affairs at Nama Electricity Distribution, said the investments were intended to increase grid efficiency and capacity while improving supply quality for residential, commercial and industrial consumers.

The programme includes expansion and reinforcement of the electricity network and new connections for homes, industrial facilities and commercial establishments.

Among the largest individual projects is the construction of a substation at Sayya in the Wilayat of Bahla with a capacity of 2x6 MVA at a cost of RO 3.268 million.

In Nizwa, the company is constructing the Nizwa City 2 substation with a capacity of 3x20 MVA at a cost of RO 2.333 million, while the Al Muaimir substation, with the same capacity, will cost about RO 2.282 million.

Another RO 2.1 million is being invested in the Shafi substation at Shafi Camp in the Wilayat of Izki. The facility will have a capacity of 2x20 MVA and include 33-kV and 11-kV feeders.

Nama is also upgrading the Al Bashair substation in the Wilayat of Adam, raising its capacity from 2x6 MVA to 3x6 MVA. The RO 1.263-million project includes 33-kV and 11-kV feeders. — ONA

Al Dakhiliyah heritage
sites draw investment push

OMAN is stepping up efforts to turn historic neighbourhoods in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate into tourism and investment destinations, seeking to bring private capital and small businesses into more than 220 traditional settlements while preserving their architectural character.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is studying and rehabilitating a number of historic neighbourhoods and heritage sites based on their readiness and potential economic and social impact, according to Ahlam bint Hamad al Qasabi, Director of the Heritage and Tourism Department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The programme seeks to repurpose historic buildings for commercial and cultural activities, including heritage guesthouses, traditional cafes and restaurants, handicraft exhibitions, private museums and cultural centres.

Events, festivals and heritage markets are also being encouraged to generate economic activity and attract visitors throughout the year.

Al Qasabi said the rehabilitation strategy sought to balance preservation of the sites' architectural and heritage value with their development as sustainable tourism, cultural and economic destinations.

Al Dakhiliyah has more than 220 historic neighbourhoods, or harat, giving the governorate a sizeable pool of heritage assets that could be developed for tourism. Several have undergone rehabilitation and development in recent years, including Al Aqr and Al Sibani in Nizwa; Al Ain and Al Sawad in



The programme seeks to repurpose historic buildings for commercial and cultural activities.

Izki; Bani Shaiban, Al Hawashim and Al Jami' in Adam; Al Aqr and Al Sujra in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar; Misfat Al Abriyeen and the Old Neighbourhood in Al Hamra; and Al Bilad in Manah.

Restoration work covers traditional gateways, known as sabahs, historic mosques and main entrances, alongside improvements to walkways and alleys aimed at making the sites more accessible to visitors without compromising their architectural character.

Among the projects are the restoration of Al Waljah Mosque and the sabah of Al Sibani neighbourhood in Birkat Al Mouz, as well as landscaping and paving works at the neighbourhood's entrance.

Restoration has also been completed on the traditional gateways and watchtowers

of the Al Ain and Al Sawad neighbourhoods in Izki.

In Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, work is continuing on a heritage trail linking the villages of Al Aqr, Al Ain and Al Sharijah.

The project includes paving the route with flat stones and installing seating areas as part of efforts to combine the wilayat's natural and heritage attractions.

The ministry is also supporting owners of heritage houses by supplying restoration materials and providing technical supervision to help convert properties into heritage guesthouses.

In Adam, it has supported community initiatives to restore and maintain the Al Hawashim and Bani Shaiban neighbourhoods by providing traditional construction materials, including sarooj,

kandal wood and stone.

The rehabilitation programme is also generating opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises involved in construction, restoration and related services, while artisans and productive families can use increased visitor traffic to market traditional products.

The ministry said revitalised neighbourhoods could stimulate local economies through higher tourism spending while creating opportunities for entrepreneurs in accommodation, food and beverage, cultural activities, handicrafts and tourism services.

Private-sector participation will be central to the programme, providing financing, operational expertise and marketing capabilities needed to turn heritage properties into commercially sustainable projects and attract local and international investment.

The ministry sees scope to develop the neighbourhoods into integrated destinations combining heritage accommodation, cultural and artistic activities, craft workshops, seasonal events, guided tours and walking trails.

Digital technology could also be used to present the history and cultural narratives of individual sites, helping broaden the visitor experience and encourage tourists to stay longer.

The programme supports Oman Vision 2040 objectives to diversify the economy through tourism and cultural and creative industries while increasing the contribution of SMEs and creating economic value from the Sultanate of Oman's heritage assets. — ONA

Oman property trade hits 1.43 billion

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 13

The total traded value of real estate in the Sultanate of Oman reached RO 1.434 billion in the first half of 2026, supported by steady sales, mortgage financing and growing demand for high-quality residential and logistics assets, according to a report by Hamptons International.

Completed sales contracts were valued at RO 688.1 million during the six months to June 30, averaging about RO 115 million a month. More than 34,000 sales contracts were registered, with monthly volumes ranging between about 4,200 and 6,400 transactions.

Mortgage contracts were worth RO 740.2 million, exceeding the value of outright sales and underlining the continued importance of bank financing to buyers and investors. A total of 13,383 mortgage contracts were registered. June recorded RO 258.7 million in total property trading, including RO 136.2 million



Sultan Haitham City is emerging as a major freehold investment destination.

in sales and RO 122.1 million in mortgages. The month saw 6,153 sales contracts and 2,253 mortgage agreements.

Hamptons expects transaction volumes to remain robust in the second half, assuming stable economic conditions and continued mortgage availability. Residential and mixed-

use developments, alongside strategically located commercial properties, are expected to attract the most investor interest.

Muscat's residential sector was among the strongest-performing market segments during the first half, driven by population growth, economic diversification and the expansion of master-planned communities.

Demand remained healthy for apartments, townhouses and villas in integrated developments and established neighbourhoods.

Foreign-buyer interest was concentrated in Integrated Tourism Complexes, including Al Mouj Muscat, Muscat Hills, Muscat Bay and Jebel Sifah. Sultan Haitham City is also emerging as a major freehold investment destination, with new neighbourhoods broadening the range of properties available to international buyers.

Monthly asking rents for unfurnished two-bedroom apartments with facilities were highest at Al Mouj, at around RO 650, followed

by Muscat Hills, Al Qurum and Madinat Sultan Qaboos at about RO 450. Comparable rents stood at around RO 250 in Al Khuwair and Al Ghubra. The industrial and logistics market was one of the strongest commercial segments, supported by manufacturing, distribution and investment in ports, free zones and industrial cities.

Demand increasingly favoured modern warehouses equipped for automation, high-bay storage and advanced supply-chain operations.

Average gross yields for warehouse and logistics properties stood at about 9.4 per cent, compared with 8.5 per cent for Grade A offices and 8.75 per cent for retail properties and prime homes in Integrated Tourism Complexes. Mixed-use buildings with a large residential component generated the highest average yield at 9.75 per cent.

The office market remained tenant-led but increasingly divided between modern Grade A buildings and older properties.

CONSUMER SHIFT

Canadian boycott reshapes grocery shelves



Canadian grocers are adapting as consumers increasingly boycott US products amidst renewed trade tensions. Retailers are improving country-of-origin labelling and seeking alternative suppliers as shoppers favour domestically produced goods.

The "Buy Canadian" campaign has intensified across the country following stalled trade negotiations and fresh political tensions. — Reuters

INFLATION PRESSURE

US inflation strengthens rate hike case



US consumer prices accelerated in August, strengthening expectations of a Federal Reserve rate hike. The CPI rose 0.4 per cent month-on-month and 3.4 per cent annually, driven partly by a 3.9 per cent jump in gasoline prices.

Markets increased bets on higher rates as persistent energy costs and firmer underlying inflation raised concerns about broader price pressures across the economy. — Reuters

CURRENCY REBOUND

Yen speculators turn bullish again



Speculators turned net long on the Japanese yen for the first time since February, signalling improving sentiment towards the currency. Futures data showed net positions of 10,796 long contracts, reversing substantial shorts a week earlier. The yen has strengthened on expectations of faster Bank of Japan rate hikes and possible asset repatriation, after hitting a four-decade low in July. — Reuters

OPINION

The unequal AI dividend: Who gets the benefits?



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at College of Banking and Financial Studies

ARTIFICIAL Intelligence is a global investment phenomenon. Governments fund national AI strategies. Corporations spend billions on AI. Investors consider AI's potential impact on GDP. But the excitement of the AI moment draws less attention to who gets the AI dividend.

Two primary questions dominate the discussion: how much capital corporations allocate to AI and how many jobs AI displaces. But far fewer are interested in knowing the economic value AI has already created. Does AI create value by improving productivity? Does it enhance healthcare and education? Does it empower small businesses to do more with less? Do these benefits extend to all countries? The evidence suggests not. The World Bank reports that 87% of AI models, 86% of AI startups, and 91% of VC funding in AI are in high-income countries, even though they account for only 17% of the world's population.

They also have far superior data centres, computing infrastructure, digital skills and research. However, an interesting divergence exists between AI investment and AI adoption.

In 2026, the Stanford AI Index recorded global generative AI adoption at 53%. Generative AI adoption was 64% and 61% in the UAE and Singapore, respectively, which is disproportionately high for their respective economic sizes. While the US leads in global

AI investment and model building, it ranks at 28.3% on this metric. This highlights an important distinction. AI building and AI model application are related, but distinct economic activities. The next phase of competition will not be about who develops the largest model, but who can use AI to enhance productivity in their economy. It will not be about creating the next frontier model.

A country can see major gains if government agencies and businesses use AI effectively in healthcare, logistics, finance and the services sector, among others.

This is especially applicable to developing/ new economies. Rather than fearing AI will displace jobs in these economies, they can use AI to offset the short-term expertise gap.

AI can assist small businesses with customer service and back-office work like accounting. AI can assist farmers in the field, help healthcare professionals manage large amounts of information and provide support for decision-making. Similarly, it can help government agencies process and analyse large volumes of information.

The World Bank reports on the development of "Small AI" technology that can solve many problems. However, developing countries face major challenges in connectivity, computing, data and digital skills required to adopt AI effectively.

AI is also changing the world of work, though the extent and impact on employment remain unclear. Younger software developers

Two dominant foci dominate the discussion: how much capital corporations allocate to AI and how many jobs AI displaces. But far fewer are interested in knowing the economic value AI has already created. Does AI create value by improving productivity? Does it enhance healthcare and education? Does it empower small businesses to do more with less? Do these benefits extend to all countries? The evidence suggests not.

are among the first to experience weaker employment prospects, yet evidence to date does not suggest that AI is causing mass unemployment across economies.

However, focusing only on employment destruction creates a major blind spot: how are AI-generated productivity gains shared globally? AI may allow one worker to produce twice as much and that may result in lower-priced products, higher worker wages, higher corporate profits, new products, or job loss. But the technology itself does not determine which outcome prevails.

Rather, firm strategy, market concentration, bargaining power, ownership structures, labour institutions and public policy shape who ultimately receives the AI dividend. For governments and policymaking worldwide, this matters.

The goal is not to measure how much governments invest in AI. It should be to measure how much value the investment creates, such as public services, greater productivity, improved healthcare, and greater economic growth.

The global AI race has begun again. The first phase was about building AI technology. The next phase will be using machine intelligence to gain economic advantage.

The countries that invest most in AI technology may not win this race. Countries that learn to implement AI technology effectively and ensure the return is widely shared may win.

CAN AFRICA SEIZE ITS MOMENT IN THE RACE FOR CRITICAL MINERALS?

ANDY HOME

The intensifying global competition for critical minerals could be a transformative moment for Africa. The continent is already a major producer of energy transition metals such as copper, cobalt and manganese but is nowhere near its full potential.

Africa's share of global mineral revenues sits at just 10%, despite accounting for 30% of the world's reserves, according to the Brookings Institution.

There may be yet more riches hidden underground. It's difficult to know, because the continent was the target of just 10% of global mineral exploration in 2024, according to the US think-tank Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Moving forward, however, that number is likely to increase as Africa becomes the front line in the global battle for resources, with the West vying with China for control of metals that are core components of both green technologies and AI data centres.

Can Africa seize its metallic moment?

To do so, the continent must break with a long history of resource exploitation by external powers. European colonisation of Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries laid the foundations for unequal trading relationships centred on the extraction of raw materials for overseas markets — a pattern that persists to this day.

From the rubber plantations in the Belgian Congo through goldfields in South Africa to the copper mines of what is now Zambia, Africans have provided the blood, sweat and tears only to see the rewards reaped by foreign owners.

Now, many African governments are realising that the global hunger for critical metals offers a unique chance to change the terms of resource trade. One obvious route African nations can take to capture more value from mining is to build more processing capacity.

Indonesia has shown others the way. The country banned exports of nickel ore in 2020, forcing miners to invest in smelters.

The strategy has been so successful that Indonesia is now the world's dominant producer, exporting a wide spectrum of nickel products, including high-purity refined metal and sulphate for battery manufacturers.

African countries have taken note.

Zimbabwe has imposed export controls on lithium, Guinea on bauxite and the Democratic Republic of Congo on both cobalt and copper, all with the ambition of leveraging raw materials to expand domestic processing capacity.

However, the number of barriers to establishing a successful processing business is "vast", according to a joint analysis by consultancy CRU and the World Bank in a June report.

Empowering industrial SMEs and entrepreneurs

INDUSTRIAL entrepreneurship and the development of small and medium-sized industrial enterprises (industrial SMEs) represent important pillars of economic diversification and private-sector development in Oman. These enterprises play a vital role in strengthening domestic production, increasing local value added, creating employment opportunities, promoting innovation and technology adoption and expanding the industrial base.

Therefore, developing an effective industrial entrepreneurship ecosystem requires moving beyond traditional financial support towards an integrated system that accompanies industrial SMEs from the initial business idea and product development stage through establishment and operation; and ultimately towards growth, expansion, integration into value chains and access to export markets.

Such an ecosystem should provide graduated services that respond to the needs of industrial SMEs at different stages of development. The entry level should provide open and accessible services for aspiring industrial entrepreneurs, including training and capacity building in feasibility studies, business planning, financial management, marketing, e-commerce and export development.

Supporting industrial SMEs also requires improving their access to appropriate industrial infrastructure, including industrial land, ready-built factories, warehouses, logistics services, utilities, and other essential industrial facilities.

Establishing comprehensive databases of buyers, distributors, importers and potential business partners can help Omani industrial SMEs move beyond dependence on the domestic market and develop regional and international market opportunities.

This should include facilitating their participation in government procurement and tendering opportunities, as well as connecting them with large industrial



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Supporting industrial SMEs also requires improving their access to appropriate industrial infrastructure, including industrial land, ready-built factories, warehouses, logistics services, utilities, and other essential industrial facilities

companies and major projects. Such linkages can enable industrial SMEs to become local suppliers of materials, components, technical services and other industrial inputs, thereby strengthening domestic supply chains and increasing local value creation.

Partnerships with commercial banks and other financing institutions can help create financing packages that are better aligned with the needs and risk profiles of industrial SMEs.

Supporting industrial SMEs in adopting automation, digital production systems, data-driven management, modern quality systems and digital supply-chain solutions can significantly improve productivity, reduce production costs, enhance product quality and strengthen their ability to compete in domestic and international markets.

Such an incubator could provide an integrated environment for product development and innovation, including access to materials-testing laboratories, electromechanical equipment, Industry 4.0 models and facilities for developing industrial prototypes. It could also strengthen collaboration between industrial SMEs, universities, research institutions and specialised centres, while providing technical, managerial, marketing and financial support to help transform innovative ideas into viable and scalable industrial enterprises.

Training and skills development are equally important to the success of industrial SMEs. Entrepreneurship programmes should therefore be connected with Oman's vocational education and training networks, providing specialised programmes in industrial management, quality, maintenance, automation, e-commerce, export procedures, accounting, financing and technical skills.

Short-term technical programmes can also be designed according to the requirements of specific industrial activities, allowing industrial SMEs to continuously

upgrade the skills of their workforce.

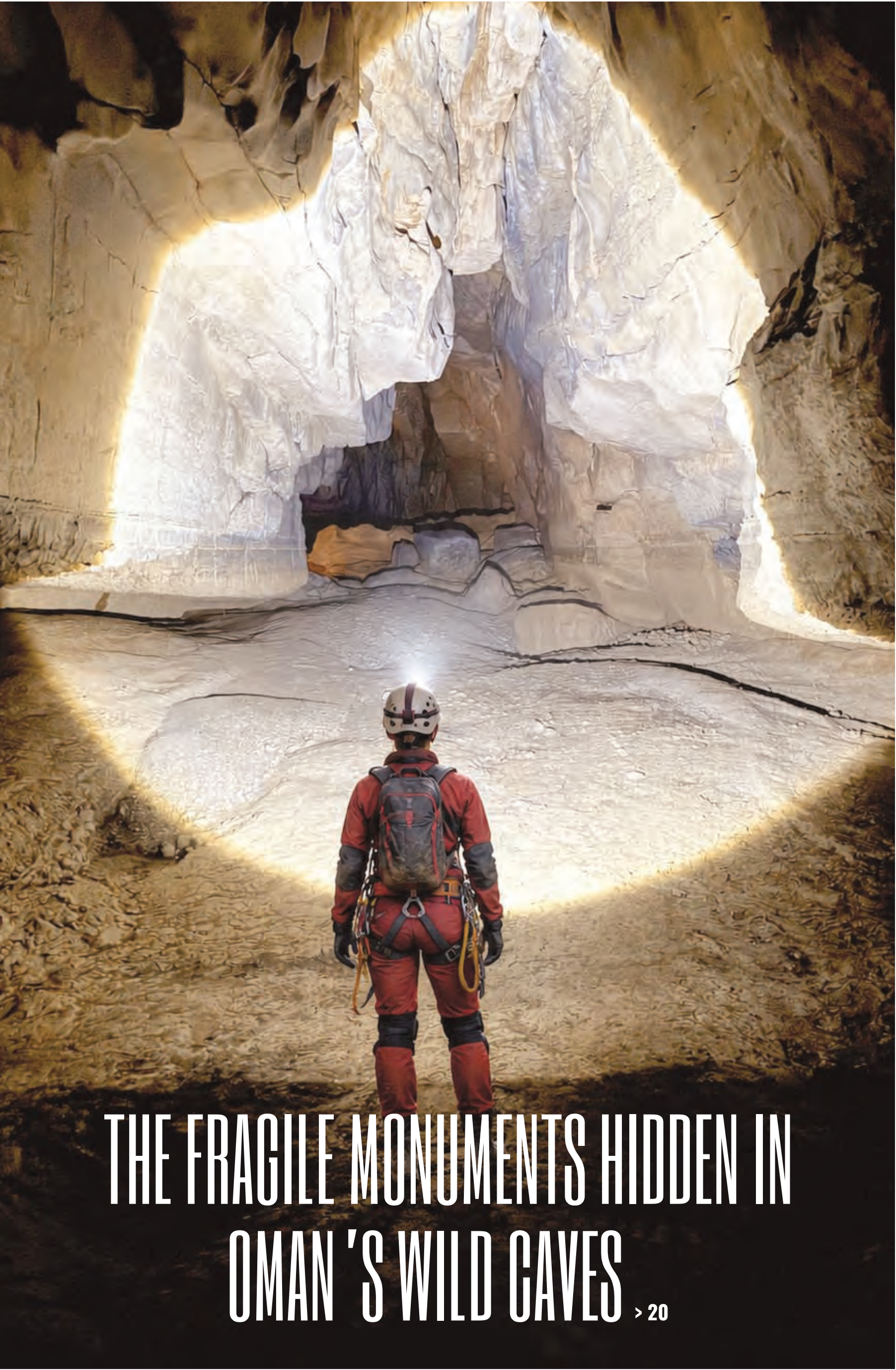
Another important priority is to integrate industrial SMEs into industrial clusters and value chains and connect them with major industrial projects. This would create opportunities for SMEs to supply materials, components, products and industrial services, while enabling them to benefit from the expansion of priority industrial sectors. At a more advanced stage, capable medium-sized industrial enterprises can be encouraged to establish joint ventures with international companies, benefit from foreign investment, access new technologies; and acquire international expertise.

The objective of developing an integrated ecosystem for industrial SMEs should therefore go beyond increasing the number of newly established enterprises. The greater objective should be to build sustainable, productive, innovative and internationally competitive Omani industrial enterprises capable of expanding their operations, creating quality employment opportunities, increasing local value added, developing nationally produced goods, participating in major projects and supply chains and accessing regional and global markets.

Strengthening industrial entrepreneurship and industrial SMEs is ultimately an investment in the future of Oman's manufacturing sector. It provides a practical mechanism for empowering the private sector, transforming ideas and innovations into productive enterprises, strengthening local supply chains, increasing industrial capabilities and supporting economic diversification.

A strong industrial SME ecosystem can therefore make a significant contribution to the objectives of Industrial Strategy 2040 and Oman Vision 2040, while supporting the development of a more productive, competitive, innovative and sustainable Omani economy.

ART/LIFE



THE FRAGILE MONUMENTS HIDDEN IN OMAN 'S WILD CAVES > 20

MUSEUM MANIA

BAYEUX TAPESTRY 'MANIA' SWEEPS UK



Staff in period costume poses with visitors inside the British Museum in London. — AFP

London's Bayeux Tapestry exhibition opened on Thursday to a British public gripped by "mania" over the medieval artwork depicting the Norman conquest of England, on display outside France for the first time.

Excited visitors who had tickets for the first day of the sold-out exhibition queued outside the British Museum ahead of the opening, where some staff had donned period costumes.

"It is back here for the first time in 950 years!" 46-year-old Catherine Pitt said in the queue outside the museum entrance.

"It is like a big bang moment in our history", she added.

The unprecedented loan from France, the result of years of diplomacy and set to last until next July, has been hailed as a symbol of renewed cross-Channel ties following the rancour of Brexit.

The Times newspaper called the exhibition a "spine-shivering experience" that has sparked "Tapestry-mania" in Britain, while The Economist dubbed it the "hottest ticket" around.

Depicting the 1066 Battle of Hastings and the invasion by William the Conqueror's Norman army, the 70-metre-long (230-foot-long) tapestry has shadowy origins.

It is widely thought to have been made in England almost 1,000 years ago before being transferred to Bayeux in France.

"I am amazed it is in such a good condition. It has survived all these years", retiree John Heys, 74, said after seeing the exhibition.

The British Museum has so far sold a record 100,000 tickets, which cost £25-£33 (\$34-\$45) for adults.

King Charles III said the temporary transfer was "a precious symbol of trust at a time when trust seems sadly to be in short supply between nations".

Around the country, students who learn about the artwork in history classes are gearing up for school trips, while businesses are bidding to capitalise on some of the fervour.

Luxury store Liberty has released cushions inspired by the artwork, priced at £165 each (\$223), while budget bakery chain Greggs has unveiled its own embroidered "Ta-Pastry".

In what is believed to be its first time travelling outside France, the tapestry depicting 627 figures and more than 700 animals has been laid flat in a raised glass cabinet.

In its home in Bayeux, it is displayed hanging vertically.

Conservators watched nervously as the delicate, 11th-century artwork was transported by truck in a risky operation from its home in northern France to the British capital in July.

France said last week that two broken threads were spotted during a full condition check.

However, the British Museum said the embroidery was "virtually unchanged", with thread breaks, measuring a few millimetres at most, not considered significant damage. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



RUNWAY

A model walks the runway during the Christian Siriano fashion show during New York Fashion Week in New York. —AFP



FILM

Italian actor Pierfrancesco Favino at the 83rd International Venice Film Festival. — AFP



MUSIC

Felix, of the South Korean K-pop group Stray Kids, performs during the final week of the Rock in Rio music festival in Brazil. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Diederik cuckoo, the singer of Khareef Dhofar



Yellow blooms rise above lush foliage

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LADY GAGA WELCOMES FIRST CHILD



Pop star Lady Gaga. — dpa

Pop star Lady Gaga has welcomed her first child with partner Michael Polansky, according to reports.

The singer, 40, who has kept a low profile in recent months, has been pictured carrying a baby in a sling alongside entrepreneur Polansky, 42, in photos obtained by Page Six.

The singer had not announced a pregnancy but has been trailed by speculation since mid-2024 which she previously denied on social media.

Lady Gaga, known for hits including “Paparazzi” and “Poker Face”, has sparked rumours again in recent months as she stepped back from the public eye when her world tour finished in April.

She was spotted attending “The Devil Wears Prada 2” premiere in New York City but has kept a low profile from

public events since.

The couple said they were dating in February 2020 and publicly confirmed their engagement at the 2024 Paris Olympics during an exchange with former French prime minister Gabriel Attal.

Lady Gaga discussed her future during an appearance on The Late Show With Stephen Colbert in October 2025 and said: “What I really want is to be a mum.

“That’s my next starring role, I hope”.

A month later she said that being a mother was something she wanted “the most”.

She shot to fame in 2008 with her breakout album “The Fame”, which featured massive global hits including “Just Dance” and “LoveGame” and she has collaborated with stars including Beyoncé, Ariana Grande and Blackpink. — dpa



Fans of Celine Dion wearing a pink t-shirt bearing on its back the initials of the name of the Canadian singer. — AFP

CELINE DION MAKES RETURN TO STAGE

CELINE Dion wept tears of joy on Saturday as she fulfilled her dream of returning to the stage after years battling a rare neurological disorder, with a sell-out concert in Paris.

The 58-year-old French Canadian singer appeared visibly moved as she opened her first full concert in six years with her 1990s French-language ballad “On ne change pas” (“One Doesn’t Change”), singing to a crowd of 30,000 enthralled fans that one newspaper said included US former first lady Michelle Obama.

“These are, of course, tears of joy. I’m so delighted to see you”, Dion said, blowing kisses to the audience at the packed Plénitude Arena on the western edge of Paris.

Her return to the stage underscored a remarkable comeback after Stiff Person Syndrome, an incurable condition that causes stiffness and cramps, forced her to cancel shows and cast years of uncertainty over whether she would ever perform again.

“The path was rockier than expected”, she said, speaking in French and English.

“But I held on to a faint ray of light in the distance, deep in the mountains”.

“Tonight, I want to sing for you, sing for myself, sing for life”, she added. “It’s unreal to be here!”, said Elisabeth Landry, a 38-year-old Quebecer who lives near the star’s hometown of Charlemagne.

“I was convinced we’d never see her again, especially not embarking on a run of concerts like this”.

Albertina Cabral, a fan from the Brazilian city of Sao Paulo, said she could barely put her feelings into words. “It’s unbelievable to stay here and to go to the concert and to see Celine so close”, she said. “And she’s feeling good, she’s happy”.

On Friday, the iconic cauldron rose above the Tuileries Garden, echoing the diva’s surprise appearance up the Eiffel Tower to perform “Hymn to Love” by Edith Piaf during the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics in 2024.

She kicks off her 26-date run with 16 sold-out shows in September and October, before returning for another 10 in May.

Fans who missed out on tickets have found other ways to catch a



Dion revealed in late 2022 that she had been diagnosed with Stiff Person Syndrome, an autoimmune condition that can cause severe muscle stiffness and agonising spasms. — AFP

glimpse of their idol.

Dion has regularly stepped outside the Royal Monceau hotel to greet waiting fans, at times breaking into song and dance with them well into the early hours.

Over her four-decade career, Dion has sold around 260 million albums in English and French, with hits including “It’s All Coming Back to Me Now” and “Because You Loved Me”.

Dion revealed in late 2022 that she had been diagnosed with Stiff

Person Syndrome, an autoimmune condition that can cause severe muscle stiffness and agonising spasms.

Dion has described it as making her feel as though she is being strangled, with cramps so intense they have left her with broken ribs.

She has returned to stage after what she has described as years of training “like an athlete”, doing ballet and pilates several times a week, as well as voice therapy.

— AFP

FEATURES



Oman's stalagmites hold records of ancient rainfall and drought within their calcite layers.



Built drop by drop, stalagmites may take centuries or thousands of years to form.



Protecting Oman's caves begins with documenting what lies within them and planning how people can visit.

THE FRAGILE MONUMENTS HIDDEN IN OMAN'S WILD CAVES



YERU EBUEN

THE entrance could easily be missed. There was no grand visitor centre here, no golf cart waiting and no neat pathway leading into the darkness. This was Al Hoota, but not the Al Hoota most people know.

The attraction near Al Hamra is well organised. Visitors follow a lit walkway past an underground lake, blind fish and formations picked out by carefully placed lights. The other side is wilder. Its natural openings lead cavers beyond the public route, through narrow passages, short rope descents, pools and stretches that require swimming. An Omani operator grades the 4.5-kilometre traverse as difficult and allows nine to ten hours.

It is often described casually as the “unmapped” side of Al Hoota. That is not entirely accurate. Experienced teams have charted several kilometres, but offshoots and less-accessible reaches remain outside the world most visitors see.

I have joined enough cave adventures in Oman to know how quickly excitement takes over. An opening becomes a corridor. The daylight behind you thins. The air changes, voices bounce off the walls and every sweep of a headlamp reveals another shape. In the dark, some formations look like ordinary rocks. It is easy to mistake them for part of the floor.

On one trip, I watched adventurers walk straight over them. That was the moment the thrill gave way to horror. Beneath their boots were stalagmites that may have taken centuries, even thousands of years, to build. No one appeared malicious. They simply did not know.

That gap matters as more people discover Oman underground. Veteran explorer Toufic Abou Nader calls Majlis Al Jinn breathtaking, but adds that its ecosystem is fragile and cavers must watch where they step. From the huge chambers and sinkholes of Dhofar to Muqal Cave in Wadi Bani Khalid, the attraction is obvious: caves offer mystery, physical challenge and landscapes few people ever encounter.

They also contain geology that is still being made. Rain absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and soil, becoming mildly acidic. It passes through cracks in limestone and dissolves calcium carbonate. Once a drop enters the cave, it releases carbon

dioxide and leaves a microscopic film of calcite behind. Deposit after deposit forms a stalactite hanging from the ceiling. Where the drop lands, another deposit builds a stalagmite upwards from the floor. Given enough time, the two may meet as a column.

The rate is not fixed. Water, temperature, cave airflow and chemistry all matter, which is why a formation may grow slowly, stop for generations and begin again when wetter conditions return. Oman's stalagmites are also climate archives. Studies of Al Hoota Cave in northern Oman and Qunf and Defore in Dhofar have used dated calcite layers, oxygen isotopes and ancient water trapped in tiny inclusions to reconstruct monsoon rainfall and drought.

Al Hoota's public section is easier to protect because movement is controlled. Beyond it and inside the many caves not developed for visitors, responsibility becomes less certain. Oman has experienced explorers and reputable operators, yet there is no clearly visible, consistently applied visitor code across its wild caves. Dr Mohammed al Kindi once put it plainly: caves should be documented and preservation planned before they are opened.

Countries with mature caving cultures already treat that as standard practice. International cave-protection guidance calls for cave inventories, individual management plans, monitoring and limits based on vulnerability. Britain's minimal-impact code recommends smaller groups in sensitive caves and routes that prevent mud being carried onto clean formations. Successful show caves monitor temperature, humidity and carbon dioxide, control lighting and train guides to interpret the cave rather than simply lead people through it.

Oman does not need to turn every cave into another Al Hoota. Some should remain wild; a few may need permits, seasonal closures or access only with qualified guides. What is needed is a common protocol before popularity runs ahead of protection.

Back on Al Hoota's organised walkway, the difference is striking. The railings tell your feet where to go. The guide tells you where to look. But deep beyond the lights, there are no barriers between adventure and damage. Out there, the future of something thousands of years old can depend on where the next person places a boot.

